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Dancing in Place: The Radical Production of Civic Spaces

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Dancing in Place: The Radical Production of Civic Spaces

by

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I dedicate this dissertation to Kevin

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Dancing in Place: The Radical Production of Civic Spaces

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Public spaces can be manipulated by choreographers to create political identifications that last long beyond the ephemeral performance event. How public space is defined and utilized is intimately connected with a society's definition of who is to be included and the kind of political community to be fostered. Through an engagement with feminist and political geographic writings I argue that dance, as an art form that is dominated by women, can create meaningful public spaces where these women express political attitudes, assert claims to the public realm, and actively use it for their own purposes. Using qualitative methods, three choreographers are highlighted to investigate how they each use symbolism, the social narratives concerning each site, and the built environment to communicate with their audiences about gentrification, environmental protection, and restrictive social mores. This work asserts that the social value of art combined with the nonverbal communication powers of the body leads to a heightened awareness of the political voice of the women involved in these urban performances.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1
The Radical Production of Civic Spaces

> As an artist my role is not to preach dogma, one opinion, but to offer people the choice to be free in how they think and act. As public artists we can offer an alternative range of choices to mainstream culture. Alternative ways of perceiving, responding and existing in the world, in public and with one another.--Olive Bieringa, Co-Director of BodyCartography Project

Public performances manipulate space in such a way that social processes can be illuminated. Amongst those involved, public performances provide an alternative lens to understanding a particular site. Through altering the perceptions and responses to a site, a dance performance is able to change the sense of place of that site. The changes in the sense of place perceived by those who experienced the performance can last a long time after the performance is over, or they can be very brief. Nonetheless, the awareness of new options within the spaces of mainstream culture creates the possibility for a dance performance to become political. A performance site becomes a political space when the identities of the site, performers, and/or audience members are altered. We tend to recognize politics in places of formal civic activity, places such as voting booths, city halls, or neighborhood council meetings. However, political activities that take place privately or in public arenas not controlled by the state are more likely to be overlooked. The public dance performances in this dissertation affect the sites in a manner that enables the choreographer communicate politically in the public realm.

While women have not been altogether excluded from political activity, they have often been subject and/or subordinated to other citizens within the society (Ryan 1992). Feminist political theory has many forms, but in general "it takes politics to be the collective and participatory engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community. The community may be the neighborhood, the city, the state, the region, or the nation itself. What counts is that all matters relating to community are undertaken as 'the people's affair'" (Dietz 1992:75). Women have used their formal standing as citizens to address informal exclusion of themselves and others from political activities (Staeheli and Cope 1994). The tension between formal inclusion and informal exclusion lies in the difference between the ideal of equality and the real world, where even categories like citizenship are mediated through relations of power. Thus, in much of academic literature, women's political activities were confined to the private arena (writing letters, organizing neighbors) or public roles based on masculine models (such as running for government office or leading Nongovernmental Organizations) (Brownill and Halford 1990). To counter these assumptions, Staeheli and Cope (1994) state that the primary task for feminist political geographers is to understand the nature and locations of women's political action. This dissertation argues that the dance performances produced by female choreographers in the public realm qualify as political action, that dance constitutes the creation of place through micro-instances of political action and community building, and that outdoor dance performances produce spaces that highlight the creation of political identities through place, art and public communication. In this dissertation I explore how three dance companies, including the Minneapolis-based BodyCartography Project whose co-director Olive Bieringa

I quoted above, use both performative actions and the locations of their performances to carve out sites of political action and communication. The other two are Flyaway Productions based in San Francisco, California, and Global Site Performances, also based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These dance companies have many similarities, including women in leadership roles, performing free in outdoor venues, challenging Western assumptions about public space, and inscribing political content to their work. Yet each company works in vastly different geographic, social and political contexts. I will show how each performance uses a particular location to constitute the political communication intended by its choreographer. My primary question is how the combination of the material conditions of the performance, the site, and the performative act (the place-creation) contribute to the formation of a political community?

Politics in Everyday Life

Everyday Life

The metanarrative of academic objectivity has been assailed from all sides over the last ten-plus years from post-structuralists, post-modernists, feminists, queer theorists and subalterns. The basic argument is that academia as a pursuit of knowledge is neither innocent nor objective. Instead, the academe has been ideologically-based and supportive of the dominant classes in society; it disguises and perpetuates the workings of power. In geography, Stoddart's 'hairy-chested geographer' (1986) is now seen as an ideological figure, one steeped in ethnocentrism, sexism, and abstraction (Gregory 1993). From Cosgrove's work *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1998), where he exposed the ideological position

behind the Western vision of landscape, to the present, geography has had to carefully re-examine its subject.

A recognition of the need for something like 'situated knowledge' amongst geographers has been the basis for the shift in geographical studies to a smaller scale of engagement, including the actions of everyday life. 'Situated knowledge' is a term coined by Donna Haraway (1989) to facilitate replacing traditional disembodied, and thus 'neutral,' objectivity with an alternative that stresses embodied physicality, social construction, and cultural politics. Haraway's contention is that the privilege given to vision in scientific discourse has hidden and protected the dominant actors in society, historically white, heterosexual males. Vision creates the illusion that a disembodied science is possible. Scientists believed that they could *see* the world and then write down its truths. But in so doing they wrote themselves out of the story. Their vision was "one without apparent limit… seeing everything from nowhere" (Haraway 1989: 189).

Haraway argues that all knowledge from the outset is embodied and partial, that is *situated*. Thus, it is through embodiment, which is not necessarily about a specific body, but about nodes and inflections orienting bodies in our lived reality, that objectivity can be realized. The objectivity granted by partial knowledge, by situated knowledge, is the *process* of working out differences and commonalities, of struggling politically to make connections, affiliations, and alliances across knowledge frontiers. "Accounts of a 'real' world do not, then, depend on a logic of 'discovery', but on a power-charged social relation of 'conversation'" (Haraway 1989: 198). Situated knowledge always contains the possibility of critical engagement.

It is in the everyday lives of people that this critical engagement, the interaction between individuals, can take place. Geographers have studied everyday life as the site of social space, the amalgamation of human experience "that is externalized and materialized through action by all members of society" (Gottdiener 1993: 131). Consequently, everyday life becomes the "inevitable starting point for the realization of the possible…(and brings) wisdom, knowledge, and power (*la sagesse, le savior, le pouvoir*) to judgment" (Lefebvre 1991; Merrifield 2000: 176). It is in the everyday lives and activity spaces of ordinary people that the entanglements of domination and resistance are played out (Sharp et al. 2000). Everyday life is the site of engagement and resistance, and thus it is also a site of situated knowledge. Geographers writing about the situated knowledge of local, even micro-scale, environments do not necessitate a scholarly parochialism. I believe that Paul Adams explained this very well, when he stated that, to "situate local politics in larger contexts, … constitute[s] political resources for those who want to change social conditions" (Adams 1996: 420). This acknowledges that local individuals and issues are situated within larger networks of association.

Democratic Politics

Many disadvantaged groups have used community organizing to gain leverage in democratic politics. This emphasis on communal politics can constitute a new form of political identity, a new sense of "we." Chantal Mouffe argues that anywhere that an individual or group identity is challenged, issues of "the political" and citizenship are an "ever present possibility" (Mouffe 1992: 99). This conception of citizenship emerges as a way of imagining the self as political actor, as the link between our private identities and the

public good (Rose 2000). The inclusion of difference as part of the foundation of citizenship has opened up the theory of democracy to actors relating to scales above and below that of the nation-state, and to do so it has focused on the way social relations are framed (Barnett and Low 2004; Staeheli et al 2004; Hirschmann and Di Stefano 1996)**.** Thinking about democracy in this way specifically addresses the artificial divide between the public and private. By addressing many scales of interaction, the political can be found in both private or public locales (Lummis 1996; Pateman 1970). Thus, within the branch of democratic writing called "radical democracy," the traditional spaces like a voting booth or city hall building share political space with protest movements, kitchen tables, and performance art.

Radically democratic writings highlight how unexpected physical spaces are used for political action and the dissemination of political information, particularly how spaces for public discourse are created within civil society (Evans and Boyte 1986). Civil society includes the elements of society that are not created or directly controlled by the state (Walzer 1995; Edwards 2004; Chandhoke 2002). It is not mass society, but small group associations of like-minded individuals who come together to share ideas and act in concert in relation to the things that matter to them. These associations include a multiplicity of organizations, some political, some social, some economic, and some artistic. Civil society can thus encompass many spaces in our everyday lives. Critiques of civil society have often expressed suspicion of the artificial separation between society and government within theories of the public sphere and argue that this perpetuates the continuation of the status quo (Wolfe 1997; Elshtain 1997). While these concerns are merited, particularly in light of the emphasis on the "individual" in liberal political theories, activists and artists have been able

to use associations formed in civil society to struggle for collective rights.

Michael Brown documented this process by studying the varied social relationships involved in the fight against AIDS in Vancouver, Canada (Brown 1997a). He detailed how the display of the AIDS Quilt produces a space that can be understood as a site of political action and communication (Brown 1997b). The exhibition hall became a space where the political elements (such as rights, duties, and belonging) were negotiated as the event allowed a group of strangers to come together and form a political community based on an emotional and epidemiological occurrence. Those who attended the viewing of the AIDS Quilt shared a bond built upon their relationship to the tragedy of the AIDS epidemic. This community had strength in numbers that was clearly visible in the sheer magnitude of the Quilt. The social relations themselves were founded in the political implications of their choices (i.e., whether or not to attend the Quilt, whether or not a particular name was listed) and thus the quilt was political but certainly not reducible to the political; the responses to the Quilt were also intensely personal.

This ability for individuals to act in concert in the public realm is the foundation of Habermas' conception of the public sphere (2000). Habermas described the public sphere as "a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed" (Light and Smith 1998). The public sphere was the place where private individuals could gather and, from the point of view of reason, seek to know the social world objectively. There, as citizens, they would transcend their subject positions and work towards consensus. Ideally, all participants in the public sphere would be free and equal. Unfortunately, a very wide gap exists between the ideals of freedom and equality and the reality of power relationships in

American society that limits the utility of the model. Even so, authors such as Sharon Zukin (1995) argue that an expanded notion of the political public sphere is still useful as groups of every description seek visibility, recognition, and redress in modern public spaces (see also Ryan 1990; Matthews 1992). Mouffe and others have argued for an increasingly expansive concept of the public sphere, one that recognizes many parallel spheres happening simultaneously. Nancy Fraser coined the term counter-publics (1997) to describe the competing visions of the public realm held by different communities within a society.

A particularly significant piece of Habermas' work is his model of communicative action (2000). Within Habermas' communicative model of the public sphere, political activity happens through communication that is explicitly rational, consensual, and striving for consensus around the common good. While communication is fundamental to politics, and thus Habermas' contribution is very important, there is one critique of the communicative action model that should be noted. Political communication does not necessarily have to be rational to be effective, nor does it necessarily have to strive for consensus. There are many situations where mutual understanding between parties will suffice.

One interesting facet of most democratic theories is the firm desire to appear rational. There is a denial of emotion within political theory, which is deemed counter-productive and coincidentally too feminine. Yet, the allegiance one feels to the principles of the particular demos is not purely intellectual and community identification is not rational (Mouffe 1992; 1993; 2000). These feelings encompass imagined communities (Anderson 1991) that are then given meaning and value (to be used for good or ill purposes) by the individuals within such

a community. “Collective identifications have to do with desires, with fantasies, with everything that is precisely not our rational interests” (Mouffe 2001: 123). Who you are in public is intimately related to who you believe yourself to be, how you define your identity, and how you wish to be perceived by others. Chantal Mouffe’s writing is useful in that it acknowledges the “irrational” and the “emotional” in political life. In many ways, Mouffe’s work is a ‘feminist’ democratic theory specifically because it values and highlights aspects of political life that have always been there but have been downplayed and rationalized away. Some feminist political theorists have critiqued traditional political theory for its assumption of neutrality that excluded those “who would not or could not master the discourse of the universal… [because of their] cultural assumptions, normative attitudes, collective prejudices, and values” (Landes 1998: 142, see also Young 1998; Shanley and Narayan 1997). The strength of Mouffe’s work is precisely this atypical focus on the affective, and concrete bodily particularity, that can make if difficult for groups to understand each other.

Passion is the element of political life that Habermas is missing in his desire to have rational discourse lead to the public good. An author like Habermas (2000), or Rawls (1999), would find it difficult to explain why art is so politically charged, particularly art in the public realm. Art, especially in its nonverbal forms, is not entirely rational. It speaks to us at a level that is more than just rational; art mobilizes our passions, too. Mouffe argues that the mobilizing of passion is why artistic practices have such an important role to play in the public sphere (Mouffe 2001). Oppressive and progressive politics can both be found in art institutions such as museums, but also in art practices such as performance.

> Politics is always about the establishment, the reproduction, or the deconstruction of a hegemony, one that is always in relation to a potentially counter-hegemonic order... artistic and cultural practices are absolutely central as one of the levels where identifications and forms of identity are formed….Every form of art has a political dimension, because artistic practice either reproduces a common-sense or contributes to the destruction of it.
>
> Mouffe 2001: 99-100

All art has a political dimension and thus has a vital role in the public sphere. Public dance performances can be active agents within civil society. By fermenting public debates surrounding cultural and political questions, the performances discussed in this dissertation are involved in the social processes through which individuals and social groups claim, expand, or lose rights to be in public spaces. The choreographers discussed in this dissertation use their personal convictions and passions to communicate with wider communities. By bringing their art work into everyday public places, they are consciously rewriting the political landscape to include art. In so doing, they are including groups and issues often left out of political discourse.

Space, Place and Public Art

Space or Place?

One of the more influential books on space is Henri Lefevbre's *The Production of Space,* first published in French in 1974. In this work he argues, "*(Social) space is a (social) product"* (1991: 26, emphasis in original). Lefebvre's basic argument was that space is produced by social practices and therefore space is inseparable from society. He argued

against the notion that space was an inert geometric container just waiting to be filled—a blank neutral stage—instead it was his contention that space was teeming with life and objects that were continually being "produced" through social interaction. I do not believe that Lefebvre's elucidation of the perceived (the physical and material components), conceived (the intellectual abstractions), and lived (the experiential) aspects of space was intended to negate that space has geometric qualities. Alternatively, this spatial trialectic was designed to *add* the importance of power and lived experience to the structural understanding of space. Lefebvre was trying to show how meaning was vital to understanding space.

This is actually similar to the ideas that were being produced within humanistic geography at approximately the same time, the early 1970s. The humanistic conception of place was concerned with identifying individuals' attachment to particular places, particularly linking events, attitudes, and locations to create a whole "place." Yi-Fu Tuan argues that the relationship between space and place lies at the core of all geographical inquiry. The definition of place, spelled out by Tuan, states that, "'Space' is more abstract than 'place'. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with meaning" (Tuan 1977: 6). The work on place describes an affective relationship with a particular, usually small-scale, landscape. Lefebvre's writings put more emphasis on the structural foundations of space, while Tuan focused more on the production of meaning in place. For this reason, much of the writing within geography on the specifics of people's lives has been written within the context of "place," not "space."

Edward Relph described places as the synthesis of human and natural orders that are defined less by the unique location than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto a

particular setting (Relph 1976). Place thus becomes the "latitudinal and longitudinal" map of a person's life (Lippard 1997: 7). Places are at the center of webs of meaning. Place is a location that is infused with human histories and memories, both personal and political. The layering of different histories in one locale forms a kind of bedrock for future action (Cresswell 2004). Massey contends that places, "are not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations… It reinforces the idea, moreover, that [place] identities will be multiple…. And this in turn implies that what is to be the dominant image of any place will be a matter of contestation and will change over time" (Massey 1994, quoted in Adams, Hoelscher, and Till 2001).

Lefebvre's writing on space highlighted s how spaces are creations that are continually in process. This led Lefebvre to integrate the political with the corporeal more than much of the early writing on place (e.g. Agnew 1987; Tuan 1977; Relph 1976). However, as the depth of scholarship grew among authors describing places, there was more attention paid to how politics are produced in place (Foote et al. 1994; Cresswell 1996; Cresswell 2006; Mitchell 2000).

Public Space

This dissertation is concerned primarily with very particular places, urban public space. Public space in its broadest meaning is any space to which all citizens are granted some legal rights of access. This seemingly simple idea is in fact charged with meaning and with controversy. Public space is valued collectively as a public resource. Meaningful public spaces are created through citizens expressing attitudes, asserting claims to a space, and then using it for their own purposes (Goheen 1998). In common parlance, public space is

associated with parks, playgrounds, the street and the central square—areas that are deemed in the public realm. However, not all open spaces are in the public realm, and not all public spaces are actually open, in the sense of being accessible and free. The ideal public space is a space for inclusive and unmediated interaction. In reality, public space is often a space of "conflict, of political tussle, of social relations stripped to their barest essentials" (Mitchell 2000: 136).

Don Mitchell argues that there are two predominant ways of viewing public space in contemporary cities (Mitchell 1995: 515). The first contention is that public space serves as the arena for human action where constraints imposed by political or social norms are less strictly enforced. These spaces are the spaces where people are free to voice opinions and to engage actively in behaviors that run counter to dominant social mores, though not necessarily in violent or obscene behavior. The second contention is diametrically opposed to the first. Public space is not a zone of free expression, but a purposeful representation of particular societal ideals, such as leisure, which then requires the holders of these ideals to severely limit the range of interaction options through various forms of spatial and social controls (Mitchell 1995; see also Staeheli 1994). Public space in this sense is the site where a properly behaved public experiences the city in a controlled and orderly manner. Within contemporary democratic theory, public space is most often understood as somewhere between these two extremes. It becomes the social space where the meaning and unity of a society is negotiated (Evans and Boyte 1986; Mouffe 1999; Habermas 2000; Deutsche 1996). These public spaces are also sometimes called "the public sphere" and, as mentioned above, can have a radical political presence in a democracy (Berman 1986; Hirschkop 1990; Mitchel,

1996). However, as people interact with one another in public spaces sometimes a limited interpretation of what is acceptable behavior will be determined (Goheen 1998; Goodman 1992; Nerone 1992). Issues and individuals can be deemed "out of place" (Cresswell 1996). This has led proponents of radical democracy to advocate for forms of democratic behavior that stretch these norms, leading to wider political participation within public space (Staeheli 1996; Brown 1997; Staeheli and Mitchell 2004; Watson 2004). These scholars are calling for a politics that cannot be reduced to something that only the 'acceptable' undertake in public space.

Public Art Performances

Enthusiasm for public arts has always been tempered by uncertainty about the definition of the term, in particular the relationship between "public" and "art" (Deutsche 1996). Allen argues that:

> The very notion of a "public art" is something of a contradiction in terms. In it we join two words whose meanings are, in some ways, antithetical. We recognize "art" [in the twentieth century] as an individual inquiry of the sculptor or painter, the epitome of self-assertion…. to that we join "public", a reference to the collective, the social order, self-negation. Hence we link the private and the public, in a single concept or object, from which we expect both coherence and integrity. (Allen 1992: 280)

However, the relationship between public and art described by Allen in this passage does not take into account the challenges posed by theorists in and out of performance studies to the dichotomies of individual and society and the private and public. The

assumption implicit in the above passage is that both "art" and the "public" are absolute and inclusive spheres (one personal, one societal) that do not interpenetrate. Despite the fact that this idea has been debunked by numerous authors (Dolan 1996; Burnham and Durland 1998; Goodman and de Gay 1998; Martin 1990; Albright 1997; Bell and Valentine 1995), there is still a tendency among scholars writing about public art to implicitly equate public space with consensus, coherence, and universality, and relegate pluralism, division, and difference to the realm of the private. This assumption leads to the tacit view that the plurality and strife that characterize the public are problematic (Senie and Webster 1992; Deutsche 1992; Doss 1995; Young 1992). The argument made is that the plurality and potential for conflict found in the public realm is a fact that supporters of public art must find procedures to reduce and hopefully remove. A typical response, particularly from public officials commissioning artistic work, is to acknowledge the broad and heterogeneous context for public art and then advocate for the art to serve a unified, if multiple, publics (Deutsche 1992). The public(s) are to be found through consulting the communities deemed immediately affected by the project. While this is a logical approach, the groups to be consulted are preexisting communities who use specific urban sites or are distinct constituencies defined by some common identification. Thus, homogeneity and unanimity cast in the shape of community becomes the desired object.

Conversely, Malcolm Miles argues that relationship of a public art, and by extension public performance, to its site does not have an absolute formula and the identification of users of a place can be problematic (1997). For instance, in some of the cases to be discussed in this dissertation, the performances take over the site, completely dominating the landscape. Yet in others the performances blend into the surroundings, even to the point of being noticed

only by chance. In each extreme how does the choreographer determine who is immediately affected? Moreover, most artists, and choreographers, who leave the privileged confines of the gallery or theater building to work in the public realm want to add to the imaginative life of their chosen environment. The art itself constitutes a valuable alternative model of being creative in public space that is in stark contrast to what is required in most industrial and postindustrial societies. The art works are intended to engage the imagination of the people who use the site, and perhaps challenge its distinct constituencies. On this account, public art is actively engaged with its surroundings rather than serving as an object to be passively consumed.

Why Write About Dance Performances?

Dance as an art form

Dance as an art form is spatial in a number of interesting ways. Dance is a form of (generally) nonvocal performance in which the body moving through space is the medium. Dancers' bodies not only shape space, but their actions energize and give meaning to the spaces in which they perform. Dance is a fundamental human activity. It is one of the few aspects of culture that truly does seem to be universal. All cultures dance. What the dance means, how the body moves, and how the dancing body is integrated within wider structures of society have as many variations as do the cultures who dance. What is similar across cultures is that the performance of a dance is both expressive and communicative (Schechner and Schuman 1976). Dance creates a kinesthetic response, producing physical consciousness of the liberating potential in the bodies of both the performers and spectators. The political possibilities of this liberating movement have been addressed by geographers studying events

as varied as American social dance (Nash 2000), nationalist dances in Northern Ireland (Morrison 2003), and stripping as a mode of resistance by Filipina women (Law 1997). Bodies put meanings into motion (Desmond 1997) and dance is particularly well suited to use the body in motion to convey and disrupt societal norms.

Many dance scholars use in-depth analysis of particular performances as a vehicle to interpret the meaning of the movement and embed dance within culture (ibid.). These authors are interested in the content of the work. But in studying dance performances, geographers have found that the context is equally important to understanding the art. In particular, Yi-Fu Tuan (1990; 2004) has shown an interest in the flow of dance, while Nigel Thrift (1997) focused on dance as an embodied practice. George Revill (2004) explored the process of learning to execute the folk dances of France effortlessly whereas Tim Cresswell (2006) examined the disciplining of mobility in English ballroom dancing. Dance performances are appealing to geographers because dancers are able to contrast the conventional social ordering and disciplining of the space to their actions.

Dance and Performance

There is much more to a dance performance than just movement conventions and the breaking of those conventions. Dance is but one subset of the genre performance, but it is the most ephemeral. It is only inscribed on air, not on paper, canvas, or stone. Except when captured by a movie or video camera, a work lasts no longer than the performance itself. To the dancer, the end of a perfect line of movement marks the end of a beauty never to be precisely recaptured. The beauty of dance lies in part in this poignancy of an existence so fleeting that it seems, paradoxically, to transcend time (Foster 1995: 39).

Performance taken as a whole is one way culture is enacted. It is a fundamental piece of what it is to be human (Schechner 1977). Performance need not take place in a theater building. It is a kind of "strategic interaction" (Goffman 1969) in which a particular message is intended to be conveyed by the artist and is then interpreted by the audience members. Baz Kershaw defines performance as:

> cultural presentations that have recognizable theatrical components: Namely, framing devices that alert the audience, spectators or participants to the reflexive structure of what is staged, drawing attention to its constructed nature, and more or less to the assumptions – social and/or political and/or cultural and/or philosophical, etc. – through which that construction is achieved. (Kershaw 1992: 15)

The most stable quality of live performance of all kinds is the audience-performer interaction. "A performance is an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group" (Schechner 1977: 30). This quality is important in defining an act as performance, even where "audiences" do not exist. For instance, in some experimental art events, such as in the Happenings of the 1960s, the audience is the other performers. Another example is the performance of some religious rituals, like the solitary praying of the rosary; although the person praying is alone, it is understood that the divine is in attendance. That a performance is done for others is an aspect of performance that is inherently geographic. It is expressed in the dialectic of the space of the viewer and the space of the viewed (Carlson 1989: 128). The importance of the *space between* the performer and spectator is indicated by the need to have both parties "present."

The performance fills that space between the performer and audience members by producing a reflexive understanding of the actions taking place. “All performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action” (Carlson 1996: 5; see also Bauman 1989; Artaud 1958). Performance makes the spectators cognizant of their habitual approaches to life by its ability to question the norms from which these assumptions spring forth. Performance can sometimes question cultural practices or values more effectively than other forms of interaction because it does not require action on the part of the spectators. For instance, the spectators are not morally bound to stop Lady Macbeth from killing her husband; instead they can ruminate on the causes and consequences of such an action. In a far different example, by surprising their accidental audiences through alternative use of public features, e.g. bus stops, the BodyCartography Project is able to expose the rules of street interaction while inviting, but not requiring, the spectators to bend their own rules and assumptions.

One of the cornerstones of performance is its ability to make the familiar “new.” This idea is discussed in depth by dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1964), where he writes that theater is able to alienate a word, a gesture or a role from its given meaning so that the spectator is able to see something familiar in a new way. This alienation effect is, “(a) representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar” (ibid: 192). This “de-familiarization” occurs when a familiar object or event is removed from its everyday context and is subsequently seen with fresh perspective. Thus when a performer appears on stage,

> he (*sic*) will at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing; that is he will act in such a way that the alternative emerges as clearly as possible, that his acting allows the other possibilities to be inferred and only represents one of the possible variants…. Whatever he doesn't do must be contained and conserved in what he does. (ibid: 137)

I would argue that Brechtian alienation, or de-familiarization, is one of the keys to understanding the power of performance in public space. Marvin Carlson has argued that the articulation of a performance makes an inherently social space that expresses a wide range of cultural information, including social, political, and economic concerns (Carlson 1990: 47). Performance in general and dance in particular can privilege certain dimensions of experience so that their dynamics and mechanisms can be better understood. Dance performances are able to illuminate social practices often obscured in the processes of everyday life. This fact enables dance performances to serve as both laboratory and model in the study of culture (Martin 1990: 10). Artists and choreographers have the ability to introduce their audiences to questions they might not have thought to ask themselves. Social life can be temporarily reordered during a performance, affecting the audience's perceptions long after the specific performance is over. Public dance performances do this primarily through altering the sense of time and place amongst the performers and audience members. The artistic event recreates the space, so the spectators can see another way of being before that possibility fully exists in the "real" world.

Feelings/Transformations

One of the reasons performance is so successful in its role of transforming "spaces

into places, the public into people" (Miles 1997: 10), is that performance is a direct form of experience. The experience of art is sensuous, qualitative, active-receptive, immediate, intuitive, and noncognitive (Berleant 1970). It is a "direct qualitative experience that is characteristically nondiscursive and hence nonrational." (ibid.: 119) Performance is thus able to express meanings not usually accessible through words. The power of music to "agitate directly" is one of the most often cited examples of the direct experience audience members have with performance (Dewey 1934; Tuan 2005; Escobar 1994; Carlson 1996). Musicians turn moods and emotions into sounds that are experienced physically by listeners. "[R]hythm is a way of transmitting a description of experience, in such a way that the experience is re-created in the person receiving it, not merely as an 'abstraction' or an emotion but as a physical effect on the organism—on the blood, on the breathing, on the physical patterns of the brain...it is more than a metaphor; it is a physical experience as real as any other" (Williams 1961; quoted by Mattern 1999: 66-69). Dance is much the same as music, except that it uses rhythm, bodies, and movement to create a kinesthetic response in the audience "without recourse to language" (Dewey 1934: 57). Performance *affects* us. Dance critic Marcia Siegel writes that the experience of observing dance is:

> fundamentally intuitive, visceral, and preverbal. Only later do we bring words, categories, systems to rationalize what we've experienced. If a dance doesn't suggest meaning by its performance, no amount of intellectualizing can put meaning into it (Siegel 1988: 30).

Dance's relationship to language is thus different than traditional theatrical experiences (Foster 1995). Dance is experienced by both performers and spectators through the body and

through the senses. We watch the dances' bodies move, listen to their breath, and can sometimes even feel the vibrations as they roll to the floor. We use our senses, under the aegis and direction of the mind, to give us our understanding of the world. Some senses can be labeled "proximate" while others are "distant." The proximate senses yield the world closest to us, including our own bodies. The position and movements of our bodies produce proprioception or kinesthesia, somatic awareness of the basic dimensions of space. The other proximate senses are touch, sensitivity to changes in temperature, taste, and smell. Hearing and sight are the senses that make the world "out there;" they are the distant senses. Since the distance between the performance and audience is essential to the aesthetic experience, it is not surprising that the aesthetic potential of the proximate senses has often been overlooked or undervalued (Siegel 1988:35-36). Yet despite being initially experienced through the distant senses of hearing and sight, dance triggers responses in our proximate senses.

This relationship between our senses mirrors the relationship of the perceiver to the performance. It is argued that the perceiver rather that being separated from the performance actually actively participates in the experience of artistic perception. Even when audience members passively watch a dance performance, they are translating this distant experience into an internal kinesthetic response. This is a reminder that art is, "an experience that is active, a process of doing something that involves knowledge and skill, and an activity that is social at heart" (Berleant 1970: 65).

The experience of seeing a dance performance is a culturally based phenomena. The choreographer thus has an ambivalent position between the individual creation of art and the larger forces of culture. This balance involves creating a performance that merges the

choreographer's artistic vision, the individual experience of each audience member, and common societal understandings. A successful performance must bridge the public/private divide. All performance has this potential; it is by definition both personal and shared. Performance has the ability to spur its audience to evaluate wider social issues. Since performance directly agitates its audience it can produce strong feelings on both political and introspective topics (Dewey 1934).

Performance is a part of society that in turn reflects the society's value systems. When public art questions the dominant values of a society or culture, it can spark debate that serves as a focus for discussion about what is legitimate subject matter for art or what is needed for social cohesion. The very act of opening up a dialogue through a performance is a valuable activity in its own right. Artists are able to use the process as well as the products of their art to encourage the imagining of possible futures (Miles 1989). Audiences are potentially engaged in these imaginative processes, which are both political and a creative activities. The political and creative are not necessarily separate, for to think of a socially or environmentally better future is in itself an imaginative act.

The Place of Performance

The meaning of a performance event does not solely reside with the work itself. Meaning is formed in relation to how the work is presented, the prevailing discourses about performance, and the experiences of viewers. The meaning of a performance therefore changes in various contexts. The way an audience experiences and interprets a theatrical production is by no means solely dependent on the occurrences "on stage." Other factors, such as the arrangement of spectators, the location of the performance, the personal

subjectivities of performer and audience alike, all contribute to the process of how the experience of a performance creates meaning.

A performance is not a discreet artifact; the actual staged event has historically only been a part, and not always the most important part, of the entire social and cultural experience. The venue of a performance is the first layer of meaning given to a performance event. As Holly Hughes notes ironically:

> theater tends to happen in theaters, whereas performance art tends to happen in spaces. A theater will be defined…as somewhere with a stage, some lights, a box office, a dressing room, head shots, and people who know how to run these things. A theater is a place that has been designed for theater, whereas a space has been designed for some other purpose: it's a gas station, art gallery, somebody's living room, a church basement, and it's always better suited for pancake suppers and giving oil changes than for performing (Hughes quoted in Dolan 2001: 43).

Yet "better suited to pancake suppers" does not imply a dance in such a place has less meaning. In fact, a performance that occurs outside of a designated theatrical space articulates and defines itself through the properties, qualities, and meanings produced between the event and its location. Assumptions about the place for art are also often called into question by site-specific work. The three dances that are highlighted in this dissertation are all site-specific pieces. Site-specific work is different than concert dance on the proscenium stage because this is work that is generated from the choreographer's research into and interpretation of the political, historical, and architectural characteristics of the site

itself. It is made for one place and nowhere else. Performances that are site-specific require reflection from the beholders, who must ask themselves why the performance is set where it is instead of on a traditional stage. The artist and audience alike confront their efforts to locate, or place, the work when a gallery or theater frame is not present. Instead, the audience members explicitly look for meaning in the surroundings. Thus a key to understanding site-specific performance is the location itself. As sculptor Richard Serra, whose piece *Tilted Arc* was installed and eventually removed from New York's Federal Plaza, lamented, "To move the work is to destroy the work" (Serra quoted in Senie and Webster 1992: 235). Or for the less dramatic, to move a site-specific piece of art (sculptural or performative) is to re-place it, to make it something else.

But why is this so? The answer lies in the production of the space and place of a performance venue. Like the art product itself, spaces and places are culturally produced. In fact, places are never finished. They are the result of continual process and practice (Pred 1984). Places thus have a kind of performativity (Butler 1993); they are made and remade on a daily basis. Understanding "place as performed and practiced can help us think of place in radically open and non-essentialized ways where place is constantly struggled over and reimagined in practical ways… as an event marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence" (Cresswell 2004: 39). "Place" becomes a flexible template for the production of difference and identity rather than a hegemonic prewritten script. Place is the context where individual agency intersects with wider social structures (Agnew 1987). Consequently, the place of a political dance performance is the product of artistic agency as structured by historically constituted social contexts.

Nigel Thrift has been particularly influential in bringing an embodied geography to the fore, fostering an understanding the political implications of bodies in space. Thrift's non-representational theory turned the focus towards bodily practice rather than interpretation (1997; 1996). Place in Thrift's writing needs to be understood as our embodied relationship to the world. However it must be noted that a non-representational theory of the body should not be *anti* representation (Cresswell 2006), because the corporeal body is always mediated through social contexts, including place.

Through performance people actively engage with places. Performance highlights the social production, the unstable networks of relationships, and the embodied practices that are crucial to understanding place. The place of performance consists of the material conditions *and* the emotional responses to the production, and reception, of the performance event. Malcolm Miles argues that public art, and by extension public dance performance, is able to create a new meanings in a place (Miles 1997). Performances insert new practices into the site that can lead to a new understanding. The observances, actions, and rituals surrounding performance events are (part of) the social matrix that creates the place of performance (Schechner 1977). This leads to the possibility of radically new interpretations and memories being associated with the sites of performance. Understanding the social matrix of a place, including a place of performance, involves understanding the multiplicity of experiences and intentions of the individuals who use and define that place. Performance is therefore a good venue for exploring space and place because each of these ideas is so consciously manipulated by the director/choreographer.

The dances considered here are actions that are undertaken not in private, but also not

explicitly in the public sphere as it has generally been defined. Except for explicitly propagandist art, art is often dismissed as too personal to be political. Art and performance are traditionally deemed as coming from the inspiration of a single individual. The feminist catch phrase "the personal is political" highlights and typifies the need to consider not only the more personal aspects of everyday life, but also the very construction of the dichotomy. Art is personal, but it is also communal, and in so being it has the potential to explode the public/ private dichotomy. It is public and, at the same time, intensely personal. In the performances that I address the artists are actively moving in the public sphere with political intent. As with the majority of the dance community, all of the companies in this study have women in leadership roles as choreographers or directors and women as the majority of the dancers. While none of the choreographers are creating dances specifically about women's lives, they all explicitly label themselves as feminist and their art as politically motivated. These dance performances therefore challenge the notions of where women's political activity can take place and what counts as political activity, even in the public realm.

Theater practitioners and critics, especially in the United States and France, have recently argued that the street, and street theater, is the site of radical political freedom (Kershaw 1992; Handke 1998). They advocate looking to performances in city streets and the embedded populist connotations to circumvent commodification and to further new forms of radicalism. Contemporary artists are seeing the potential of returning the arts, and the alternate ways of seeing bodies in a space, to the everyday lives and spaces of people. Baz Kershaw in particular argues that by transgressing the urban space, rather than just resisting institutions of democratic government, new spaces can be produced, spaces for politically

democratic action. The choreographers discussed in this dissertation are rewriting the urban landscape to include performance and in so doing are also including groups and issues often left out of political discourse.

That art has the power to transform is not a new concept. Herbert Marcuse argued that art has the "power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who established it) to *define* what is *real*" (Marcuse 1978). What is different about the liminality of contemporary performance is the setting. Jill Dolan and others have argued that the material conditions of a performance—the synergy created through the space, the place, the performers, and the audience—that offer moments of transformation. It is the act of being, together, that has radical potential (Dolan 2001). For Lefebvre, it was vital to understand the interlocking of material, conceptual, and experiential components of space because "a revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential" (Lefebvre 1991: 54). The active re-production of space within a performance is one of the most powerful reasons for doing, seeing, or discussing performance. Jill Dolan writes that, "(a)udiences are compelled to gather with others, to see people perform live, hoping, perhaps, for moments of transformation that might let them reconsider and change the world outside the theater, from its macro to its micro arrangements" (Dolan 2001: 43). Although Dolan is referring primarily to performances that happen within theater spaces, her ideas are equally relevant for outdoor sites. We go to performances looking for moments of revolution, moments where the space is changed, transformed into something new.

Mouffe calls for "new spaces" of political action but is silent on where those spaces might be or more importantly how those spaces might be constituted. Among geographers

interested in her work none have focused on art or public art. I believe that art, particularly as performance, has something unique to add to the discussion of new spaces of politics because performances literally create new spaces and places. Art has something to say to society because it speaks to the unspoken assumptions of a culture. It speaks to our feelings, our passions, and our ideals. By highlighting the non-rational, looking at dance performances can give us a fuller understand of ourselves as political beings. It can also be a venue for women to make their voices heard in the public sphere. Performance is a new space for citizenship that underlines the importance of embodiment and affective responses to the understanding of political spaces.

Methodology

As a dancer and audience member, I have personally experienced the political power of outdoor dance performances. As a geographer, I want to understand this art as a political act. The purpose of this study is to discover how performance produces a space that is both artistic and political. The data supporting this research were gathered using qualitative methods and consisted of participant observations, semi-structured open interviews, transcripts of audience question-and-answer periods, surveys, video, photographs, and the creation of an archive of documents relating to the various dance pieces and locations chosen for performances. The data accumulated by this dissertation also consisted of detailed field notes. This information was then coded and edited for storage.

The principal sources of my notes were participant observations, interviews (with choreographers, performers, and audience members), and video documentation. The human subjects of my research included the choreographers, dancers, and audience members who

chose to take the time to speak with me and fill out my surveys, both at the sites of the performances and through online surveys conducted after the performances. I spent time with each company during the rehearsal period to observe the working styles, imagery, and techniques unique to each. I also observed performances and documented the actions of both the performers and the spectators, including the occasional overheard conversations. The companies' dancer pools vary between small traveling companies with less than four performers to broad community-based projects that incorporate over forty performers with varying levels of involvement in the production. The audience sizes also ranged greatly, from approximately twenty-four to over 1,500 people.

During two of the performances (Flyaway Productions and Global Site Performances) I handed out a brief survey to the audience members, which, beyond gathering basic information, requested permission to contact them at a later date for an interview or focus group. I chose to use these surveys at only two of the companies' performances because only these had clearly delineated spaces for the audience during performances, which is conducive to survey techniques. Obviously my ability to canvas such divergently sized companies and audiences was limited. Overall I had a return rate of approximately 10 percent for the two productions where it was possible to deliver surveys to the audience members. I contacted the audience members at six months and at twelve months after the performance to determine how much of the performance and the performance site the audience members could recall in order to detail how effective the communication of a particular image or idea was. Concurrent with these ethnographic interactions I also conducted in-depth research on the actual sites of the performance to provide a much fuller picture of the performance and its

impacts.

The audience members of the BodyCartography Project were more difficult to get information from because of the nature of this performance. Neither the performers nor the audience was confined to a specified area as the performance traveled down a Minneapolis city street. In fact, many of the 'audience' members only saw a moment of the entire piece. For this piece I relied on audience comments about the piece collected on the BodyCartography website and an in-depth conversation with one audience member whose contact information was provided by the choreographer. I made attempts to contact more of audience members that knew the choreographer Olive Bieringa after the performance was over, but did not have great success. This imbalance in data influenced the structure of the dissertation as I focused more on the use of the body and the transitory nature of transgression in relation to this performance rather than on audience feedback.

In order to recruit participation in my study, I initially contacted each choreographer to be sure that she was amenable to my observing her company's performance process and writing on it. I explained the basic nature of my study and provided a research proposal for her to share with dancers if requested. I recruited audience members by attending the performances and then personally requesting they fill out a survey. In most cases, audience members self-select to attend these performances and are generally interested in giving their feedback to the performers. To accommodate this, and to allow for some direct feedback from the audiences, I included in the surveys a space for general comments and feedback to the choreographer.

In trying to be sensitive to the power imbalances created by research and potential

risks to the participants in my study, I decided to use choreographers' and participating dancers' names only if they appear publicly in press materials. I also chose not to include any disparaging comments (if any were made) by a dancer or choreographer about a specific individual that could cause social or professional harm or embarrassment. No audience member is identified, and the video recordings and still images are primarily of the performances, with audience members not recognizable.

Talking to the choreographers, dancers and audience members was important because the acquisition of knowledge is not neutral. I needed to construct a study that acknowledged that my role as researcher was only partial; other voices were important as well. Donna Haraway (1989) claims that only when knowledge is situated within existing power structures is it possible to construct "a usable, but not an innocent, doctrine of objectivity" (ibid.: 189). Our traditional notions of objectivity need to be recast as an incomplete project, grounded in the physicality of specific human bodies and their artifacts. Thus, it is only through orienting embodiment (the artist's, audience members', and mine) in interlocking fields of meaning that any objectivity of lived reality can be realized. Situated knowledge also insists on a mutually constituted relationship to the object of study. Therefore, an "object" is pictured as an actor or agent in the unfolding interaction, not as an inert screen or resource. Situated knowledge means that I am a part of the work I produce. The very act of doing research, asking my questions, taking notes, and then turning that data into a dissertation explicitly places me in the story of this scholarly production. I am an "involved, situated and integral part of the research and writing processes" (Ellis and Bochner 2005: 18).

Outline of the Present Work

Performance embodies a particular kind of social interaction and thus produces its own form of space. If viewed from such a perspective, many of the practitioners of contemporary performance are taking their art into alternative spaces to articulate countercultures or new social movements. It is the material conditions of a performance, the synergy created through the place, the performers, and the audience, that offer moments of obtainable transformation. It is the act of experiencing the performance, together in place, that has radical potential (Dolan 2001). I intend my cases to illustrate and ground the abstract theories of radical democracy. The cases are descriptive in nature and meant to add realism and in-depth examples to the theoretical relationships between citizenship and place as formed by practice that I hope to build.

In the second chapter, I begin to ground my study in the empirical realities of specific performances. I discuss how the BodyCartography Project employs the strategies and tactics of guerilla art to play, resist, and transgress the body norms of urban streets. The BodyCartography Project performers choose public places that convey particular assumed meanings for their performances and through active engagement with the site uncover (and discover) the innate potential of the location. This chapter deals heavily with performance and the body, city streets, and how movement creates spaces. My main goal in this chapter is to further the understanding of the role of the corporeal body in understanding places and how we move through them.

In the third chapter, *Mission Wall Dances*, a site-specific piece performed on a three-story mural in the Mission District of San Francisco, California, will take center stage. I

develop my argument by highlighting how cultural landscapes, political spaces, and everyday public spaces, when taken together, forge a vital link in understanding how art and performance can be interpreted in an urban context. I discuss in particular how memorialization can be used in performance to create a political dialogue on gentrification in the public realm. I explain how performance and the urban form relate to one another to inform the affective impressions of the audience. The overall goal of the chapter is to prove that an ephemeral event has "lasting" emotional and intellectual impact on the audience members' understanding of the performance site.

The fourth chapter highlights a large outdoor site-specific performance that for the past nine years has been created by choreographer Marylee Hardenbergh on the Stone Arch Bridge in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. This annual event is treated by the choreographer and many of her associates as a modern ritual that has a spiritual and educational underpinning. In this chapter I look at the potential of performance to reconceive or "revision" a declining neighborhood and the importance of ritual in reclaiming space. This chapter is framed by three interlocking ideas: the importance of vision, the creation of place by practice, and the influence of ordinary and extraordinary events on the identity of a specific site. The specific goal of this chapter is to demonstrate another model of how communication through performance can happen and to provide more specific examples that lasting changes in audience members' actions can result from knowledge gained during a performance.

The conclusion reasserts that performance in the public realm is a highly visible art form in a postmodern world that is self-conscious, reflexive, and obsessed with simulation. I

return to the theme that places are made through practice and that outdoor public performances are a particular form of practice that potentially intervenes in the processes of how people understand the site in which the performance takes place. In this chapter I review the methods used by the various performance companies to challenge their audiences to think more deeply about the topic of the performance and its integral relationship to the site. I also highlight how these performances created varied political spaces, but that in all the cases there was the creation of a political space and that the political communication endured. The key to both of these findings, I argue, is the use of emotive and corporeal bodily expressions to change the sense of place and link into the passions that guide human's political lives. Dance and politics are both fundamental human activities; this dissertation will show how these two spheres interact and constitute one another in public spaces.

Chapter 2:

Dancing in the Streets: *Go! Taste the City*

We play, a most serious form of play, one that reminds us, and the people watching us, that life is about enjoying it. As usual though, people heckled, applauded, congratulated us. Some …added that we all need to get a job.

–Shelly Smith, BodyCartography participant

The first time I personally met Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad, the co-directors of the BodyCartography Project, was the day after Thanksgiving of 2004. I had responded to a call for performers sent out over the company's listserv. That day, Olive and Otto were planning a public performance to promote "Buy Nothing Day" on the busiest retail day of the year. The plan involved meeting at a downtown studio to get warmed up and learn some basic choreography. There were seven of us total, including Olive, Otto, myself, and three performers with local professional dance companies. The last individual had little to no dance training. After a very brief 40 minutes, we headed out into the stores, skyways and streets of downtown Minneapolis to dance and hand out flyers with information on the unorthodox holiday (see fig 1, appendix A).

It quickly became clear that putting on the clothes for sale and then dancing in the department stores was not particularly subversive. I repeatedly stopped dancing to approach customers, many of whom believed we had been hired by the store to entertain the shoppers, "you guys look just like those GAP ads you see on TV!" Despite the seemingly positive

response to our antics by their patrons, the security guards asked us to leave every store we entered, the open crystal court of the IDS tower, and the various skyways we attempted to use as performance sites. The only place we were left alone to dance and hand out our flyers was on the sidewalks of Nicollet Mall (see fig 2, appendix A). This two and a half hour encounter with the dance practice of the BodyCartography Project made a few things very clear to me: the company was interested in publicly engaged work, it was not elitist about where or with whom they perform, Olive and Otto were willing to put their own (and their dancers') bodies at risk for disciplining from security guards, and lastly that I absolutely loved the act of doing this kind of dance.

The BodyCartography Project

The BodyCartography Project began in 1997 in New Zealand as an explicitly political and geographic dance endeavor. Bieringa is a classically trained dancer who began exploring alternative dance practices in college where she earned a BFA focused on "Improvisation, Composition, and Performance" in the Netherlands. She eventually became certified in Body-Mind Centering, Shiatsu body work, and is a licensed DanceAbility instructor. Ramstad's dance background is informed by a pervasive interest in a diverse set of "physical practices," including Capoeira Angola, Butoh, Tai Chi, and skateboarding. Both of them shared a desire "to engage and provoke audiences in diverse contexts," which led to the 10 year old collaboration of the BodyCartography Project ("About BodyCartography").

As an ongoing project, their dance practice has evolved through several locations, projects, and personnel. Despite this fact, the BodyCartography Project has remained committed to improvisational and somatic movement practices as a means to investigate and

relate to their chosen performance environments. The BodyCartography Project chooses public places that convey particular assumed meanings for their performances and through actively engaging with the site it aims to uncover (and discover) the inherent potential of the location. In essence, the performers go into public places and dance. Sometimes the movement performed is choreographed in advance and sometimes the performers improvise. The BodyCartography Project often surprises their audiences by using public features, e.g. bus stops, as performance venues. The actions of the BodyCartography Project create situations where the rules of acceptable behavior in public space are challenged. The BodyCartography project was driven to perform in these unusual (public) locations by "a physical, social and democratic impulse" ("Mission/History BodyCartography").

The BodyCartography Project plays in urban streets by inspiring "adults to take on a childlike curiosity and appetite for physical investigation" (Bieringa and Ramstad 2004: 99). Play is older than human culture. It is a process of experiment that "encourages the discovery of new configurations and twists of ideas and experience" (Schechner 1993:42). Play is associated with leisure and so is dance. Both play and dance have a significant function within human society because they transcend the immediate needs of life and impart meaning to their actions; they are freely chosen and generally enjoyed (Alland 1976; Thrift 1996; Huizinga 1976). Play is understood as happening outside of normal space and time; it is not ordinary real life. Play goes beyond the pure physical activity of it; it is of the mind, too. It adorns and amplifies life. Fun resists analysis and logical interpretation. Play is a site where our rational and irrational sides interact without contradiction. Play allows individual players

a kind of freedom from reality and logic because the actions undertaken are clearly understood as "just pretend."

According to Thrift, dance is like play in that it is the fabrication of a different world, "dance is therefore about using the body to conjure up 'virtual,' 'as- if' worlds by configuring alternative ways of being through play" (Thrift 1996: 147). This 'as-ifness' quality is precisely what sets play apart from real reality. One plays knowing that the assumptions are assumptions which have been freely accepted and may be freely dropped. In the theater, this same concept is known as the suspension of disbelief. Because of this need for mutual belief "the play community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over" (Bauman 1993: 170). Both play and dance allow for a feeling of being apart from the world yet together in this experience. Play participants mutually withdraw from the rest of the world for a time and thus can reject the usual norms of society. This experience retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game (or performance) (Huizinga 1976: 54). However since play happens in the context of culture what is considered play is socially constructed, and often tied to the location of the game. Play, like performance, is generally located and segregated to specific sites—tennis court, playground, sports stadium, dance hall, but often slips out of these places into the world at large. Yet again like dance, play itself does not necessarily require a particular site; it can be transient and is resistant to strict localism or placement (Game and Metcalfe 1996). While we might associate baseball with major league stadiums, a game of catch can happen anywhere.

So what does it mean that the BodyCartography Project plays in city streets? Streets as old as civilization and are a fundamental part of the urban realm. More than any other

aspect, streets have come to symbolize the vitality of urban life, with all the possibilities for human contact and conflict. In this way streets become a primary locale for the creation of contemporary urban culture. Yet some argue that the traditional scenes of urban communal life, the streets and squares, courtyards and parks, are "under attack" as pedestrians move off the streets and into commercialized spaces (Boddy 1992). Michael Sorkin describes the erasure of the fundamental urban activities—like pedestrians walking the streets—as a part of the process of turning modern cities into "theme parks," that "provides the bare functions of a city, while doing away with the vital, not quite disciplined formal and social mix that gives cities life" (1992: xii). He goes on to say that struggles of pedestrians "to reclaim the city is the struggle of democracy itself" (ibid.: xv). The BodyCartography Project reclaims the streets by transgressing the norms that discipline movement in public spaces —they dance in places where even pedestrians rarely go anymore.

The BodyCartography Project use public spaces as sites for communication despite the fact that these spaces have essentially lost their communicative function. Malcolm Miles argues that art is able to counteract anonymity and lack of feeling in many urban open spaces (1989: 4). The role of art in these cases is to enliven the public realm, to transform spaces into places, and the public into people. By creating a lively urban encounter, this company's work highlights how this occurs. They create short lived engagements with a site that transgress the assumed actions appropriate to that place. However, over time this fundamental practice has evolved. The early works of the BodyCartography Project were almost exclusively large group pieces, but now Olive and Otto also perform individually as a part of the project. In the last two years the BodyCartography Project has increasingly

focused their group work on longer explorations of a site, natural or 'obscure' environments, and using video to capture the dance in innovative ways. However, in this chapter I am going to focus on the foundational premise for the project: a short urban based performance. The primary performance that will be discussed was a solo performance by Olive Bieringa titled *GO! Taste the City* and was performed in Minneapolis, MN on August 12, 2005. I personally attended this performance. The other performance by the group I will mention to elucidate particular points was the *Buy Nothing* performance mentioned above. These performances will allow me to address how we move in city spaces, the assumptions about the appropriate uses of public space, and the role of identity in understanding the power of transgressive actions. Part of the difficulty in doing scholarly work on dance, is that academic writing often fails to capture the life, the vitality, or the ephemeral qualities of what dancers do, particularly when the performance is outdoors in public spaces.

I believe that transforming bodily spatial knowledge into observable action is what the BodyCartography Project is attempting to do when it performs. They do this by actively engaging the sites they perform in and interpreting them for their audience. The BodyCartography Project is interested in radically influencing their audiences by moving their performances out of proscenium arenas and into the world at large. The audience oftentimes is accidental; they are people riding the bus or walking to work, minding their own business-- and then they are suddenly an audience. They are transformed into spectators of a theatrical event. By choosing a space between "the microcosm of bodily experience and the macrocosm of the world," (Bieringa 2002) *and* by creating dances in public places that surprise 'the public' into becoming 'an audience,' the BodyCartography Project disrupt

traditional methods of understanding the body in space, urban public spaces, and who qualifies as an audience.

The BodyCartography Project engages their audience in a number of different ways. Besides performing in busy urban areas with a concentration of pedestrian traffic, the company usually has one performer whose role it is to roam the crowd and talk to the audience about what is going on. In so doing, they actively open up the process of their improvisational work for understanding. Over the course of a performance, many dancers may fill this role at different times. An interesting aspect of this movement into and out of the defined performance space is that this individual often intentionally "blends in" with the audience, creating a situation where it is not exactly clear who is a performer and who is not. During a solo performance like *Go! Taste the City*, Olive Bieringa garnered the help of a friend who took this role for the entire performance. In embodying a kind of playful dance practice of how to relate to one's surroundings, rather than portraying a narrative story line, the BodyCartography Project's performances allow the spectators to create their own meanings. This intentionally ambiguous relationship of the 'public' to the company's work is one of the company's primary goals.

The relationship of the performers to their audience is greatly influenced by the site of the performance. Modern dance inherited the formal proscenium stage from ballet and, for the most part, did not question if this was the only space appropriate for artistic dance. Choreographers, beginning in the 1960s, began to question why it was necessary to build a set to look like a quarry, when instead; one could bring the audience to the quarry and perform there? These choreographers refused to keep their art contained within the

proscenium box imposed by Western societal norms. The BodyCartography Project takes this initial idea even further, taking their art into the public realm rather than waiting for the audience to come to them. The legitimacy conferred upon proscenium theaters as the appropriate site for performance was generated by the social understandings of the space itself. The BodyCartography Project is producing a new understanding of the space through their performative actions. Tim Cresswell argues that individuals and actions that transgress social expectations of spatial behavior denaturalize dominant norms thereby subverting and revealing the power relationships present (Cresswell 1996). Choreographers are able to de-naturalize and reanimate a site "by moving the dancers and the audience through it during the dance" (Lefevre 2005:46). The BodyCartography Project recontextualizes their chosen sites by using them for performance. Their site-specific street performances are 'transgressing' the cultural norm of limited communication in the public realm, and consequently where art is to take place (Cohen-Cruz 1998; Colleran and Spencer 1998; Flusty 2000). The BodyCartography Project uses dance in public space as an act of transgression that 'reclaims' the space for the purpose of community dialogue, among the dancers, among the spectators and between the two.

It is clear that spatial knowledge is one of the primary aspects to be conveyed and explored anew because, when I questioned Olive Bieringa (2002) on why she chose the name BodyCartography, this was her written reply:

> Body Mapping
>
> bodymapping
>
> the mapping of the body

the mapping with the body

the mapping of the body within the landscape

the role of the body within the world

within our everyday experience

cartography as choreography

choreography as cartography

This definition is about mapping and cartography. Mapping is the representing of spatial data in a visual form. From this simple definition many subset questions can be asked, particularly "What is spatial data?" and "What is a visual form?" Spatial data can be cognitive—how we think about our world; mathematical—how we measure our world; and correlative—how we interpret patterns in the landscape. The BodyCartography Project is interested in all three, but pays particular attention to the cognitive aspects of our understandings of space. In the explanation of their name above, Bieringa lists a number of different ways that she sees maps and the body interacting in her work with Otto Ramstad. Maps and bodies are separate entities, yet they are also blurred. She writes of the body as the site of mapping, as the tool for mapping, as the connection to both everyday life, and the world at large. In this dance project the art and science of making maps (cartography) is compared to the act (and art) of making dance, and vice versa. Both cartography and choreography are interpretations of a viewed reality, an understanding of space made visual. "Space can be mapped, then, in different modes--utilizing lines on a page, sounds in air, movements in a dance. All three are symbolic forms, though the symbols differ; visual, oral, and kinesthetic" (Carey 1988: 27).

Most maps use paper or pixels to convey their visual representations, whereas dance is using the moving body as its inscriptive tool. Yet both dance and mapping have conventions that are employed to make them more or less 'readable' to a general audience. Conversely, in both cartography and choreography some of the most innovative work pays as close attention to what is left out of the visual imaging, as to what is included. In each practice, exclusion is a fundamental piece of the artistic choice. This is so because maps, and bodily movements, are never socially neutral (Harley 1991). Maps and performances are both pieces of art that are crafted by their respective makers' intent and then subjected to outsiders abilities of interpretation. In neither case is the product—map or movement—innocent of representation.

The Dancer's Medium

The body in space is the medium of dance. The body however is not exclusive to dance; in fact, it is the general medium through which humans come to know their world. Thus the body has inspired quite a lot of scholarship in various forms. Much of the work on the body has been produced within the medical fields and concentrates on the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly is focused on the biological and chemical aspects of the body. Other scholarship, primarily in the social sciences has elaborated how these primary actions gain a new significance through the literal and figurative meanings attached to these actions by human cultures, classic examples include the writings of Irving Goffman (1959) and Edward Hall (1966). However, within these and other writings within social science, the physical relationship of a body to space that is so integral to dance writing is often underestimated. For instance in surveying writings on the body McDowell and Sharpe (1997: 3) noted that the body has been viewed as:

> a surface to be mapped, a surface for inscription, as a boundary between the individual subject and that which is other to it, as the container of individual identity, but also as a permeable boundary which leaks and bleeds and is penetrable.

However, the works being referred to by McDowell and Sharpe do not address the *corporeal* spatiality of the human body, but mainly its discursive markings (feminist, sexuality studies, subaltern studies) or its sensing abilities (phenomenology). Even within geographic writings on the body this corporeal spatiality is often assumed rather than explicitly addressed (Nast and Pile 1998; Thrift 1996). A notable exception to this assumption is found in the works of authors writing about the spatiality of disability (Longhurst 1997). Within dance writing, the volume of the body careening through space is a primary source of knowledge. Dancers express the tangible spatiality of the body that is so often missed in other writings when they describe the act of their art. For instance, as modern dance moved away from picturesque of ballet to more affective movement styles, two of the founders of this dance form described the act of dancing as 'moving from the inside out' (Doris Humphrey 1927) and as 'making visible the interior landscape' (Martha Graham 1950). "Dance is not aimed at describing events (that is, it is not representational) but at evolving a semblance of a world within which specific questions take their meaning" (Radley 1995:12). Dance uses the physicality of the body to articulate complex thought and feelings that can not be easily put into words. This idea was encapsulated by another of the modern dance icons, Isadora Duncan, when she stated, "If I could tell you what it means I wouldn't have to dance it."

Dance historian Elizabeth Dempster explained the corporeal relationship of the body to space within modern dance, stating that "the modern dancer's body registers the play of opposing forces, falling and recovering, contracting and releasing. It is a body defined through a series of dynamic alterations, subject to both movements of surrender and movements of resistance..." (1995: 28). However, Dempster also highlights the emotional and symbolic aspects of dance performances since in this art the body is explicitly used as the site where social and psychological, spatial and rhythmic conflicts are enacted. Both of these aspects, the physical and symbolic, can be seen in most dance writing. For instance, one of the performers in BodyCartography Project wrote, "We begin to just dance, to warm up, sense ourselves and our desires. To touch one another. To carry, to lift and fly. To take space and travel through the crowd. Dancing here is our healing" ("Archive BodyCartography"). Or in a different vein, Deborah Hay notes, "I dance by directing my consciousness to the movement of every cell in my body simultaneously so I can feel parts of me from the inside out….I dance by feeling the movement of spaces simultaneously all over my body so that it is like bringing my sensitivity to the very edges of my being from my head to my toe so that I can feel the movement of the air around me" (quoted in Tuan, 1993: 39). These writings acknowledge the physicality of the body, while focusing on how the dancer's actions energize and give meaning to the places of their movement.

The duality of mind and body are integrated in dance writings and practices. The dancers consciously use their bodies to both convey and disrupt societal norms regarding the role of the body in space. Dance is a performative act where space, history and society come together tangibly—as an *individual's* sensing body is viewed as a *moving* corporeal entity

that is then *encoded* with gender, race, class, ability etc. Indeed, it is this intersection of elements that is vital to understanding the power of dance. The dance uses bodies to transmit and represent complex cultural codes. The BodyCartography Project continues this tradition by "exploring public space and social interaction with our bodies/mind and a sense of humour…" ("Mission/History BodyCartography").

The BodyCartography's Context: Eat Street

The performance of *Go! Taste the City* took place along a 7 block span of Nicollet Avenue that connects the portion of the street in downtown Minneapolis to a section of Nicollet Ave. known as "Eat Street" because of its concentration of ethnic restaurants (see fig 3, appendix A). Nicollet Avenue runs along a north-south route connecting downtown Minneapolis to its southern border. Since first being densely settled around turn of twentieth century by middle-class mangers, entrepreneurs, and young people this is a commercial strip that has boomed, busted, and is now booming again. The performance of *Go! Taste the City* was "60 minutes of live improvised action, interaction and response to several blocks of real estate and real people in downtown Minneapolis" (Bieringa and Ramstad 2002). Over the seven blocks "walked" during *Go! Taste the City*, the streetscape goes from "so clean, with corporate types in their suits" to "completely different populations and activities" as you get closer to the I-94 freeway overpass and then cross over it (Bieringa and Beverlin 2006). In fact, in a public question and answer session following the screening of a film of the 2006 version of *Go!* Olive called this section of Nicollet Ave a "wide open canvas."

The area of Minneapolis served by Nicollet Ave, fell within original city limits, but was not built up until after 1860 when it became home to some of the most prestigious

families in the city because the area was isolated from the workers' residential neighborhoods in the downtown region, yet was easily accessible to the downtown business district. Nicollet Ave also had the added attraction of allowing easy access to the Lakes district where many wealthy families kept second homes. The prestige of the neighborhood surrounding Nicollet Ave. waned after street cars were put in along the avenue and a building boom began. A middle-class neighborhood sprang up along the transportation routes to downtown between 1890 and 1920. In fact, most of the buildings that are still visible today along Nicollet Ave were built during this time period. Nicollet Ave. was well served by street car access to downtown. Consequently, the street quickly became the main connection between the residential sections of South Minneapolis and the downtown mill and warehouse districts. Nicollet Ave was so important as a transit corridor that it was one of the first streetcar lines to be electrified in Minneapolis, and the very first to be double-tracked (Olson 1976). By 1924, the Nicollet line had the highest number of patrons in the Twin Cities. The street was also crowded with small businesses, which was typical of the streetcar-determined landscape of the day (ibid.; Warner 1962). The Great Depression of the 1930s shifted the patterns of residential housing, with many of the single family homes being subdivided into duplexes and a larger percentage of the population living in the three-story apartment buildings that were built during the 1920s. By 1930s the strip along Nicollet Ave was one of most densely populated corridors in city. The population however was not the middle-class families of the previous three decades; the residents had become progressively younger and more transient.

The neighborhood changed drastically after 1954, when the streetcar tracks were pulled up (Lanegran and Martin 1983). The decline of the streetcars was brought about by the rise of the American car culture. The change in the streetscape hastened the exodus of the remaining middle class residents to the suburbs and left behind a street that was ill-suited for cars. In the 1960s and 1970s, many of the older homes that had survived the depression were torn-down and replaced with multi-family units. This change in housing was particularly noticeable in the blocks near downtown because so much housing had been lost when Interstate 94 was built on the south side of downtown. The recession of the 1970s stopped the construction of walkup apartments, but also limited the ability residents to invest in their homes.

The decline of the residential neighborhoods along Nicollet Ave. near downtown was in stark contrast to section of street that went through downtown itself. During the early 1960s the city of Minneapolis hired a little known architect from California, Lawrence Halprin, to design a transit mall down the length of Nicollet Ave from its beginning at Washington Ave. to 15th Ave. Halprin's original design was intended to "integrate transportation with the art of landscape architecture" (Martin 2006: 125). His streetscape included a curved bus route, wide sidewalks, heated bus stops that played baroque music, trees, and street level shops and cafes. The design was an immediate success evidenced by a jump in retail sales along the mall of over ten percent in the year after it was dedicated in 1967. Unfortunately, many of the materials that Halprin used in his design did not stand up well to the brutal Minnesota winters and have since been completely rebuilt.

In the 1960s and early 1970s planners in Minneapolis struggled to find ways to bring the prosperity along the downtown corridor to other parts of Nicollet Ave. One of the primary concerns was reversing the population decreases in the inner city neighborhoods of Minneapolis. One method of re-attracting residents to the neighborhoods surrounding Nicollet Ave was to mimic the suburbs. In particular they tried slowing traffic on the avenue and building new homes. While these attempts were generally unsuccessful they were not detrimental to the neighborhood along Nicollet near downtown. Another tactic of mimicking the suburbs instituted did have a detrimental effect. The planners recommended repressing the linear economic activity on the Nicollet Ave in favor of a centrally located "one-stop" retail center with lots of parking. After many years of searching for a tenant to suit this commercial idea, Kmart opened in 1978 at the corner of Nicollet and Lake St. Unfortunately for Nicollet Ave's business community, one of Kmart's conditions for occupancy was the blocking off of Nicollet Ave at Lake to allow for more parking. After so many years of looking for a tenant for this lot, the city acquiesced to Kmart's demands if only to finally have a source of revenue from the site (Anderson 1985).

The closing of Nicollet at Lake caused the businesses along Nicollet between downtown Minneapolis and Lake St to lose the drive-by customers who had been crucial to their sustainability. These small businesses were also undercut by Kmart's cheaper prices and ability to be a one-stop shopping location. Many of the stores in the area between downtown and Lake St. either relocated or went under in the early 1980s unable to survive in the new business climate. Some of the only businesses that were thriving on this portion of Nicollet at this time were the adult bookstores and saunas, which did not depend on "accidental" drive

by customers. The area still supported a diverse population, but also faced the increasing "social problems" associated with a business sector focused on adult themes. Drugs became a major problem in the neighborhood, as well as prostitution. One six block segment that included the last portion of the performance site was called the "brothel of Minneapolis" in the mid 80s (Schons 1989).

Despite all of this bad news, this particular neighborhood never declined as much as some other portions of Minneapolis. This section of Nicollet Ave benefited from its proximity to downtown Minneapolis just as it had in its heyday. Despite the stigma of drugs and prostitution, the area was still very convenient for commuting downtown and maintained some residential population focused on downtown. The housing ranged from dilapidated walkups to un-renovated mansions left over from the 1880s. Most of the housing was utilitarian duplexes and small houses on small lots (Lanegran and Martin 1983: 11). Due to its location, the neighborhoods closest to downtown responded quickly to social and cultural shifts, including eventually gentrification.

There were many plans to take advantage of the potential afforded to Nicollet Ave by its location. Using money granted to local community groups in Minneapolis by the Dayton-Hudson Corporation (the forerunner of the Target Corporation), the Whittier Alliance working with the City of Minneapolis designed a program to solidify and extend the commercial heart of the neighborhood on Nicollet (Hammond 1982). The plan also included working to rehabilitate housing, reduce crime, and improve the neighborhood image. One of the primary foci of this plan was the goal of helping small businesses in the area. Lenders were extremely reluctant to lend money for small businesses particularly restaurants, stores

that were immigrant owned, or any business on a street plagued by drug-dealing and prostitution. Nicollet Ave had all three. Thus, to help the small business a system of Commercial Rehabilitation Loans was instituted to provide up to $30,000 at 2% interest for site rehabilitation and equipment purchase (Jacobson 2005).

Early efforts to recruit businesses from adjacent neighborhoods were rebuffed and it was unclear who would move into a neighborhood in apparently such dismal shape. Kim To, a Vietnamese immigrant, was the first Asian business owner in this section of Nicollet. As he rode the bus down Nicollet he noticed that he was not the only Vietnamese person on the bus. In 1981, To opened up A Chau Grocery in the previous Uptown Mopeds at 2738 Nicollet. As his business grew, To rented out other storefronts to other Vietnamese owned businesses. Nicollet Ave was in some ways an ideal location for the boom in Asian businesses that took place over the following decade. The rents for commercial space had been driven down by the generally low property values. This allowed immigrant entrepreneurs who did not have a lot of capital to begin their businesses. The scale of the storefronts on Nicollet Ave was appropriate to what immigrant entrepreneurs could afford because the streetcar-era storefronts were still standing. Also the kind of businesses that were initially opened, primarily Asian grocery stores and restaurants, were the epitome of "destination" businesses. These were commercial operations that did not depend on drive-by traffic for operations. Their customer base would seek out those establishments based on the services and products offered. In some ways the Asian groceries were similar in their success on Nicollet to the adult bookstores and massage parlors, once people knew about the businesses they would come. In fact the restrictions to traffic on Nicollet Ave that were a problem for so many

traditional businesses, helped the Asian grocers and out-of-the-ordinary restaurants because it kept the rents low and these entrepreneurs did not care about problems with traffic flow. Eventually, absentee landlords and the contracts for deed gave way to direct ownership for the shopkeepers. This change in ownership status contributed to the stability of the street and the continued economic growth. The 1990s saw an increase in Latino immigrants and entrepreneurs along Nicollet Ave. In an area already known for its ethnic restaurants, including some who had weathered the bad times, such as the German-themed The Black Forest Inn, more restaurants and more diverse restaurants began to open.

In 1991, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) created a program that was similar in its aims to the earlier Dayton-Hudson Corporation grant, neighborhood revitalization. Nicollet Avenue Corridor Study, funded by NRP was written by Whittier Alliance, Steven's Square Community Org, and Citizens for a Loring Park Community, the three neighborhood organizations representing areas from downtown to Lake Street along Nicollet Ave. The aim was to build on the popularity of pedestrian-transit mall along the downtown portion of Nicollet Ave. by making the next section of Nicollet a favorable destination. The central theme of the plan was to coordinate the streetscape improvement along the entire route. It was believed that this would "strengthen the physical condition and vitality of commercial areas… [and] improve [the] image and character of the corridor, especially as it relates to the pedestrian environment and perceived and actual personal safety" (Barton-Aschman Associates 1994: 2). The primary objectives of the plan were to unify the visual impression of the street. This included a unified design for buildings, sidewalks, lighting and street objects (like trash cans and bike racks). The plan also included

recommendations on how to improve parking along the corridor, including the incorporation of specific parking lots. The plan also detailed recommendations on lessoning the traffic disruptions at Lake Street, although it was non-committal on K-Mart's continued blockage of the street. The plan was put into action and the streetscape finished in 1997 to the tune of $4.5 million dollars. As the results of the changes, it became apparent there was a desire to revamp the image of the street to match its new appearance. It was thought that a new unified name would solidify the area in the minds of residents and outsiders alike. A local marketing firm was hired to help with the public relations. The idea that eventually stuck came from an article in the Star-Tribune by food writer Jeremy Iggers entitled "Eats Street" from January 1997. After some discussion, the name was adopted, but as "Eat Street." The Neighborhood Revitalization Program provided $40,000 in funds which was combined with some private donations that paid for lamppost signs, advertising, and maintenance. The success of the remarketing campaign, combined with numerous reviews that celebrated the local restaurants, ensured "Eat Street" would become common parlance in the Twin Cities.

Since 1997, the portions of Nicollet Ave between downtown and Lake St. have been relatively stable and prosperous, and the "Eat Street" image has given the street a positive reputation throughout the Twin Cities. The residential landscape is changing again as well. A new 29 unit loft-style condo complex opened in November 2005 near the corner of Franklin and Nicollet Ave. This is indicative of the more gentrified landscape that is beginning on Nicollet Ave. As the neighborhood and its businesses become more upscale, the customer base has shifted from one that was almost exclusively Asian to one more ethnically mixed (Jacobson 2005: 47). Two restaurants, the new Rainbow and AZIA, offer hints for a different

future for Eat Street, with their fusion food and high prices, but the bulk of Nicollet Ave's establishments still serve the same double market: immigrants and Twin Cities' general restaurant-goers, which has been Nicollet Ave's success formula for 20 years.

The market based story of eager entrepreneurs and cheap rents is now something of legend in Minneapolis planning circles. Yet the core of Nicollet Ave's revival during the mid-to- late 1980s was not the product of mimicking suburban development. In the end, Nicollet Ave's economic success came about because of the small, underappreciated, and gradual process of helping small businesses grow. Ironically, it was the destruction of property values in the late 1970s that was a vital factor in the recreation of the area a decade later.

Go! Taste the City

Olive Bieringa has been doing outdoor public art for 8 years. Olive first performed on Nicollet Ave in 2001 soon after the BodyCartography Project relocated from San Francisco to the Twin Cities. She and her co-director Otto Ramstad performed a group slow walk down the street. The reason Nicollet Ave was chosen for both performances was because the streetscape completely transforms as you travel south towards Lake Street from a downtown pedestrian mall to an area dominated by ethnic restaurants and immigrant populations. Over the seven blocks danced during *Go! Taste the City*, the streetscape goes from corporate to ethnic.

Like many of BodyCartography's earlier works, the original Nicollet Ave dance in 2001 involved dancing in a group. Bieringa acknowledged that a part of her earlier dance practice was to provide a sense of safety in numbers. As her process has evolved over time,

she now also chooses solo dance performances and has yet never been harassed. Bieringa describes her dancing as about "engaging with and revealing the landscape that is already there. It is not about dumping something into the landscape…. [the performance] is a negotiation and an interaction with a public space…. an opportunity to engage with people" that she would not ordinarily interact with during her day (2006). Bieringa is very "sensitive to the situation [as she performs]. If someone wants to play with me—I'll play. I'm celebrating life with people" (2006). She noted that it is often individuals who have the option of being "invisible" in public space that are the most uncomfortable interacting with her; she specifically mentioned "Caucasian corporate types."

Olive Bieringa's Rob Brezny horoscope for week of the performance, August 11, 2005, described the event so well she included it on the programs and on her website record of the event (Brezny 2005).

> According to my analysis of the astrological omens, Pisces, the week ahead will be overflowing with paradox. Lucky danger may be headed your way, or a risky opportunity that will feel like an ordeal even as it brings out the best in you. I also wouldn't be surprised if you had encounters with benevolent trouble, exacting love, and weighty silliness. To thrive in the midst of these rich anomalies, you should suspend any prejudices you might have against puzzling evidence. Don't just tolerate the contradictions--love them.

The performance of *Go! Taste the City* began a few minutes after 5 pm in Peavey Plaza in front of Orchestra Hall in downtown Minneapolis, MN. The Plaza, designed by M. Paul Friedberg, anchors the southern end of Halprin's pedestrian mall along Nicollet Ave.

This plaza has been called a "premier outdoor gathering space in a city urban core" (Gabarini 2006: 2) and "one of the finest modernist urban plazas in the country" (Martin 2006: 125). It consists of a sunken open area that is turned into an outdoor ice rink in the winter. The plaza is dominated by concrete, with steps leading down to the open area, with slabs of concrete of different heights that include small patches of grass embedded in their centers, and a large cascading waterfall in the southwest corner. There were approximately ten audience members standing near the clock tower at the corner of 11th Street and Nicollet, waiting for the performance to begin. I assumed that most of these people had heard about the performance through the BodyCartography Project email listserv, as I had, since the performance was not officially a part of the Fringe Festival occurring that week. Of the many individuals who hang out, pass through or live in this Plaza of downtown Minneapolis, it was obvious who was here for the performance: we were predominantly young (mid 30s or below) and artsy looking, with fashionably scruffy clothes and hair, but the most telling feature was the cameras, not to mention our repeated looks at the clock to see if it was time for the performance to begin. There was a woman acting as an usher/guide who was handing out programs. After approximately five minutes, she came over and let us know the performance had begun, none of us had noticed—we were looking at the clock, not into the plaza. Our attention was directed towards Olive Bieringa, who, when I first saw her, was lying face down in one of the few plots of grass in the plaza about 50 yards from where we had gathered (see fig 4, appendix A). Bieringa was wearing a light blue pinstripe suit, running shoes, and had short spiky auburn hair. As she began to move forward with inch-worm-like movements I was able to see the bright orange t-shirt worn under the blue suit coat. Once she

came to the edge of the platform she laid her body down and hung over the edge. From this resting position she would reach her whole body out to 'fly'.

After the flying a couple of times she walked her body out to a plank position with her feet still on the platform, she then lowered herself in one piece onto the sidewalk below. She stood up quickly, ran to her right, jumped onto another platform and began interacting with the three men sitting on that platform, hanging out in the plaza. She took the baseball hat off the first man and placed it on the head of the third. She placed her hands on this man's shoulder's and pulled him back into a 45 degree angle and looked at him upside-down. Bieringa shook her head sat the man back up, grabbed the hat back and returned it to its original owner. While this was happening the three were laughing and teasing Olive as a "crazy white chick." After the hat was returned to its owner, Bieringa ran behind the three men approximately 30 ft. toward the area of the Plaza where the waterfall is located. Approaching the waterfall there are a series of shallow pools that collect the water of the waterfall. Over these pools are a series of large concrete squares that while not touching each other act as a walkway above the water leading to the waterfall. When Bieringa reached the first square, she dropped to her hands and feet and shuffled across with her rump high in the air. On the last square before the waterfall Bieringa stopped with her hands and upper body over that square and her lower body still on the last. She put her head down between her hands and kicked her feet up into the first of three head stands she would do over the course of the entire performance. After thirty seconds or so, she lowered her legs and lifted her upper body until she was standing again. She quickly crossed the remaining space until she stood at the edge of the waterfall. She titled her face up, energy went through her arms

straightening them at her sides slightly to the back, and she stood there in submission as the water's spray misted her. Appearing to revel in the sensation her arms slowly rose until they were in the position I have come to associate with evangelical prayer (see fig 5, appendix A).

Up until this point, the dozen or so people who were following Bieringa's progress through the plaza did so from a comfortable distance, not coming too close. As she entered the water the audience began to tentatively enter the water too. Then without any warning, Bieringa turned and ran up the stairs leaving the sunken plaza area. After she ran up the stairs one man, who I later found out was her co-director Otto Ramstad's father, went to the spot where Bieringa got misted and stood there getting wet. It was as if he wanted to experience for himself the sensation Bieringa had just shown us (see fig 6, appendix A). At least half of the audience who had been following Bieringa, stopped and watched this man in his late 40s to early 50s playing in the water. As he left the water, I along with the other audience members dawdling by waterfall started up the stairs following Bieringa.

Olive Bieringa told me later that she got across the cross walk at 12th and Nicollet Ave, looked around and saw that she was alone. While she waited for her audience to exit the plaza, Bieringa danced in the center of the business people waiting to cross the street. As I exited the plaza, I saw Bieringa running from the northwest to the southwest corner. Once across and two feet onto the sidewalk, she stopped, collapsed, and rolled onto her shoulders with her feet reaching towards the sky. The impression was that she was experimenting with balancing on such a small and unusual base, that of her shoulders. Once settled on her base, Bieringa also lifted her arms into the air so the triangle between her scapulas was the only piece touching the ground. Her legs widened into a V just wider than hip width and swayed

slightly seemingly in the breeze. I was struck by the sensation of sidewalk on her back, as she swayed in the wind the sidewalk gave Bieringa a mini massage.

She was located directly in the center of the area where people gather to wait before crossing the street. Passers by at the corner consistently pretended not to see Bieringa. At one point there were three office workers dressed in business casual who stood right next to Bieringa's feet (which were at chest level) and blithely continued their conversation without ever acknowledging her presence by look or action. This express lack of attention paid to Bieringa was particularly striking in contrast to the dozen or so individuals looking at nothing but Bieringa. As we the "intentional" audience watched, filmed, took pictures and notes, the "accidental" onlookers ignored her. It was almost like these office workers had heard and were now obeying their mothers' admonitions that it is not polite to stare. I briefly followed these three office workers to see if their conversation might shift to what they'd just seen once they were farther away from Bieringa. I cannot say that that did not happen eventually, but the conversation did not shift within the quarter block I followed them.

When I returned to the group, Bieringa was standing in the center of a small grove of trees planted into the sidewalk. Like in the pool earlier, the emphasis of this portion of the performance was on the sensation of a natural element within the urban context. As Bieringa stood with her legs hip distance apart rooted to the pavement with her arms like branches reaching and swaying in the light breeze, the primary sounds were provided by busses roaring by spewing exhaust (see fig 7, appendix A). You could see how the wind and the shimmering of the trees' leaves were influencing her body. Bieringa spent three to five minutes not moving, yet swaying slightly. As she stood there time seemed to slow down and

the slight shifts in her weight became the focus. The shifts in weight slowly built over the next few minutes until she eventually knocked herself off balance and continued down Nicollet.

She ran backwards 100 feet down the block to where a public pedestrian walkway linking Loring Park to Nicollet Ave intersects with Nicollet. At this intersection Bieringa turned her body forward and proceeded up the walkway that was as wide as a narrow street. The walkway itself was paved, with benches and shade provided by trees in planters boxes planted in the middle. The walkway was remarkably quiet compared to the bustle on Nicollet. It was like an oasis. Once well away from Nicollet Avenue, Bieringa began swaying in the wind in a similar way to how she had moved both in the fountain and between the trees. Although she was swaying in wind, the movements were bigger and involved swaying with her whole body, particularly moving her arms and torso. Her movements were slow and deliberate. It reminded me of a modern dance version of Tai Chi. This section of the performance was very different than the recent portions of the dance because instead of being surrounded by people and noise, Bieringa was alone on the walkway and none of the audience members chose to follow her.

Again with no warning, Bieringa turned and shot through the trees that separated the walkway from the sidewalk and buildings along Nicollet. The trees were planted on the flat top of a slanted brick pyramid that created the landscaping. As she came through the trees she slid down the slanted slope of the pyramid feet first like a baseball player. When her feet hit the sidewalk on Nicollet Ave, she turned and scrambled back up the slope, when she got to the top, she slid down again (see fig 8, appendix A). She did this pattern repeatedly. At one

point, she accidentally knocked out a brick and hurriedly put it back in place. She experimented with various ways of sliding and scampering including going down head first and on her stomach. As she reached the bottom, she rolled from her stomach to her back and kicked both heels over her head; briefly she lifted into a full shoulder stand before the momentum brought her feet to the ground behind her, executing the most incredible roll up an incline I had ever seen. After completing the shoulder roll up the pyramid, she slid down purposefully knocking out the brick again with her foot; turned, replaced it, and slid one last time. Once prone face down the length of the incline, she raised her body onto all fours and shot off running like a sprinter. During this portion of the dance I was once again struck by the attention Bieringa paid to the texture of the materials she was in contact with such as the roughness of the bricks, the warmth of the bricks heated by the sun, and the dirt that was accumulating on her suit.

All along the block that is dominated by the Hyatt, Bieringa ran. At points, she raced someone on a bike, slowed to put up her fists to cabbies, and ran along a bus as if it was her pace setter. Across the street from Ichiban restaurant and immediately in front of the bus stop at the north-west corner of Grant and Nicollet, Bieringa laid down in the street right in the bus lane (see fig 9, appendix A). The point in the road where Bieringa had laid down was an area the city utilities had marked for removal. As she rolled from her back to her side to her front and back again, it did not take long before a bus was barreling down the street toward her prone body. Bieringa continued lying in the street until the last possible moment, when she jumped up to the sidewalk and ran to the back and then behind the bus, and finally across the street to the east side of Nicollet.

She then ducked under some construction tape and began to dance in a pile of dirt and rubble in front of Ichiban Restaurant. She scurried up the five-foot-high mound of construction debris and then once on top she froze (see fig 10, appendix A). When she began to move again she performed a series of isolations; first one hand would move, then freeze in its new spot, then a knee would go crazy. My impression was that Bieringa was breaking down the pieces of the body so that we could watch them at one time. Her other parts were not truly frozen, as in static, but the movement allowed into the rest of her body complimented and lent focus to the part of her that was being featured. Since the audience was watching from the other side of the street, busses kept obstructing our view

When Bieringa was finished on the mound she picked up a very large red rock from the rubble and began to walk down the center of the Nicollet Ave along the double yellow lines (see fig 11, appendix A). All Bieringa did was walk, for less than two blocks, yet this felt like the longest section of the dance. All she did was walk down the center of the street, yet for me this was one of the most moving portions of dance. At first Bieringa walking in the street with a big rock seemed funny, the kind of humor that produces nervous laughter from spectators as someone breaks the rules. The rock was so big it made her look like a child. But the humor soon became poignant and then somehow tragic. There was a desperation to find one's own path as the cars went by on both sides going 25-40 mph. At one point a man who had been walking in the other direction on the east side of the street came out into the road and walked alongside Bieringa for a couple hundred feet. Eventually, he went back to his side of the street and continued on his way.

Bieringa told us later that the man had thought she might be suicidal and wanted her to come out of the street and let him call someone to come get her. At first, when the man asked what she was doing, Bieringa had just answered "I'm walking in the middle of the street." After it became clear how concerned for her safety he was, she explained it was a part of a performance and that she had no intention of doing herself bodily harm. After this, he wished her well and continued on his way. This passerby was not the only one to try and stop Bieringa —numerous cars honked, slowed down, or tried to switch lanes. Also, as Bieringa passed the Clicque beauty salon located on the first floor of the Loring Towers, the stylists noticed Bieringa and began to bang on the windows and gesturing at her. Some of the audience members waved back at them. We were so secure in our understanding of the event—that it was just a performance—we were unable to see the concern expressed by those who did not know, those who thought that this was real and thus had a moral obligation to help Bieringa avoid getting hurt. After the performance when a number of us who had seen the entire piece went out for dinner, Bieringa told us what the man had wanted, and the cars and beauty salon took on a whole new meaning. It made me proud of the care displayed by strangers, but it also made me question all the people who walked by and did nothing. Did they realize it was a performance, or did they not care? I also began to question the surety of the audience that Bieringa was safe. Did our alienation from the activity lead to complacency of the danger? Eventually Bieringa returned to the sidewalk with her big rock and handed it to an audience member (who had no idea what to do with it—she eventually put it next to a building) and Bieringa was off and running again.

She crossed the street and approached the New Delhi restaurant. Outdoor tables lined the sidewalk most filled with small groups of patrons who were sharing a drink as no food was evident. Bieringa went in to the restaurant while we watched from the sidewalk. She danced in the front window for less than 20 seconds before a man came over, said something to her, and escorted her to the front door. As she came out she made a quip that "I guess you can't dance in New Delhi" which was a funny reference to Bollywood. A man in his mid-thirties with dark hair, sunglasses, black T-shirt and dark jeans, and who was obviously intoxicated asked Olive what she was doing. He was sitting at the table closest to the front door that Bieringa had just exited. She looked at him and said, "I am dancing down the street." The man responded by saying that he loves to dance, and got up out of his seat and began to move. His friends were laughing, the New Delhi employee looked less than happy, and our newest performer flailed around a bit in his drunkenness. He was not quite steady on his feet so he kept his stance wide and his knees bent. Most of his movements were isolated to his arms. He moved them up and down at sides of his body. I was painfully reminded of a child playing sea monster. Bieringa also took a wide stance, with her bent knees and moved her arms. Her arms however were creating arcs away from and then towards her own body. The two of them continued this arm duet slowly moving toward the curb. As they reached the curb they made contact (see fig 12, appendix A). While continuing to stand they began to turn like two cogs using each other for balance. After two or three rotations and almost knocking over a parked motorcycle Bieringa stopped the man by gently holding his shoulders from behind and directing him back to his friends who by then had out their cell phones and were snapping pictures.

Bieringa then turned up the street and started running again. This running not only broke/ended the dance with the man at New Delhi, but it also continued the theme of the race. As Bieringa was running along this section of Nicollet I realized she was racing a bus, then a bike, once she stopped and put up her dukes challenging a passing car, which she then raced after. Except for the audience members on bikes, we were unable to keep up with her. Our vision of Bieringa was blocked by busses, cars and other pedestrians as she danced and ran down the street. Periodically she would wait for us to catch up by momentarily sitting on the curb, usually at an intersection, where she would wave at the cabbies and motion for them to honk their horns.

At the corner of 15th and Nicollet Ave Bieringa entered the International Corner Café that is primarily patronized by Somali immigrants, many of whom own and operate cabs in the area. As she danced in front of the window the men playing pool or checkers and drinking coffee in the shop, completely ignored her—even when she did a headstand at counter (see fig 13, appendix A). Two female audience members went into the cafe and bought coffee. Bieringa also purchased a coffee to go, which she gave to a third audience member who had ventured inside. What was so striking about this moment in the performance was not Bieringa's movements per se, but their context. She was in a café where until the audience members followed her in, she was the only Caucasian and the only woman. The gender and ethnic balance of the café was striking once it was broken. Also intriguing was the dozen or so other audience members stood outside the café in a group and watched the action through the glass. Despite being ignored by the patrons of the International Corner Cafe, we were being watched. A police cruiser with two male Caucasian cops went by, went

around the block and stopped across the street. They just waited, probably trying to see if we were up to some kind of mischief. After Bieringa emerged from the café and went leaping and turning through the intersection the policemen continued on their way. This was an interesting instance of surveillance.

On the next block, Olive Bieringa had made prearrangements with a fashionable hair salon "Olive's Salon" to come into their space. She went in and did a baseball slide across the front of the shop in front of the main window. She popped up so from the outside only her head and upper torso were visible. She began playing with the throw pillows (all of them had pictures of olives on them) located on the short sitting bench by the window (see fig 13, appendix A). Megan, a stylist at Olive's Salon told me that it is fun when Olive comes into the salon. "It scares the clients," but it is "funny and bizarre….it breaks up the day." Megan noted that Olive really "utilizes how much space we have when she does those slides..." and that the salon "welcomes her back every year" (Megan 2006). After using the doorframe the way the way a mime uses a pretend box. She pressed herself up so her feet didn't touch the ground.

After Olives' Salon, Bieringa was back out on the sidewalk in front of General J's Military and Surplus Store where she began picking up glass from the sidewalk and placing the shards on the windowsill of the shop since there were no trash cans in sight. Once satisfied that the ground was clean, Bieringa continued walking towards the freeway overpass that was now within sight. As she passed an abandoned liquor store next to General J's, Bieringa tipped her weight from side to side so that her gait became a series of alternating arcs. As she passed Marker Liquor another pedestrian walking towards downtown

passed Bieringa. He was a tall (over 6 foot tall) man who looked like he might be Hispanic. He was wearing large dark glasses, a two day old beard, and a Vikings jersey. He had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth at an improbable angle, but most notably he was wearing a horned helmet complete with long blond braids. As he walked by he avoided even looking towards Bieringa. Perhaps she was too weird.

She ducked through an opening in the fence to enter the parking lot next to the liquor store. She used the wires holding up a billboard as props, bending over them, having them support her weight and diving underneath them. The billboard was placed on top of a support of a metal girder approximately eighteen inches to two feet across that had a large grove in the center. Bieringa went up into a headstand but because her shoulders were supported by being wedged into the metal pole she did not have to use her arms to maintain her balance (see fig 14, appendix A).

Next she ran onto the freeway overpass. Approximately half way across, she stopped and turned towards the traffic rushing underneath her. She just stood there on freeway overpass with her hands over her head and eyes closed (see fig 15, appendix A). She swayed forward and backward slightly, as if blown the wind produced by cars and the vibration on the bridge. After a minute or two she arched back and let the weight of her arms turn her toward Nicollet Avenue and away from the freeway. Bieringa ran to the other side of the street in a wide arc that took her to the other end of the freeway overpass. She stopped running, leaned against a “No Parking” sign and the performance was over (see fig 16, appendix A).

Movement as Encounter: Dancing in the Streets

> We may use our bodies to manifest life itself, but most of us are seldom conscious of producing beautiful movements… Although the ordinary movements and gestures of life often have a certain facility and flair, we tend to be aware of them only when they have become strained or inappropriate-ugly. Movement is thus like health, usually taken for granted until there is some lack of it….Dancers and athletes, in particular, are aware of and enjoy their bodies' liberating power. (Tuan 1990: 36).

The most common way of being aware of our bodies moving through city spaces is as a pedestrian. Walking is a culturally coded pattern of behavior that is inevitably mannered and stylized. Walking bodies communicate meanings through the shared tenets of societal norms. Much of the geographic work on walking was inspired by Michel de Certeau writings on walking in cities. His work elucidated the 'hidden' spatial practices of the public. Through his analysis, de Certeau has become a "champion of the common folk and street level social theory" (Crang 2000), for he maintained that, "(h)istory begins at ground level, with footsteps" (de Certeau 1985: 129).

While walking may seem like a natural mode of transport for humans, it is "informed by various performative norms and values which produce distinct praxes and dispositions" (Edensor 2000: 81). Thus the unreflexive and habitual practice of walking unintentionally conveys societal conventions regarding the 'appropriateness' of certain bodily actions. This is true to the point that the way one walks can reinforce (or disrupt) cultural practices of racial, ethnic, class, and gender differentiation (Domosh 1998). Thus besides "(re)producing

distinctive forms of embodied practices (and particular bodies) walking also (re)produces and (re)interprets space and place" (Edensor 2000: 82). The act of walking becomes a kind of performance. The academic writing that discusses walking in the streets gives a glimpse of the potential power of dancing in the streets as a pedestrian. While walking is usually an unconscious act, dancing (particularly in the manner undertaken by the BodyCartography Project) actively and consciously manipulates the aspects that make walking an interesting and powerful point of study.

Patterns are created as people move through space. David Seamon (1979) described this as 'place ballets' which suggests a situated relationship between performer (pedestrian) and place. In fact, walking creates a particular sense of place (Adams 2001). This sense of place is created and based on direct contact through multi-sensory inputs. Adams' work builds on assertions by Yi-Fu Tuan that "multi-sensory apprehension of one's surroundings is qualitatively different than vision or mediated vision—it is a more profound mode of experiencing place" (Adams 2001: 189). Walking brings the pedestrian into contact with her/his environment in a way that is absent from more mediated versions of transport. While it is true you may recognize the landmarks, many of the aspects of the place (such as the sounds, smells, and inhabitants) that bring a place to life will remain *terra incognita*, shut out of existence by the rolled up windows of our cars. Walking builds a closer connection to place. "In peripatetic place-experience lies the basis of a special kind of knowledge of the world and one's place in it" (Adams 2001: 188).

Olive Bieringa used her performing body to learn about her performance site and then expressed this bodily knowledge to her audience. The body is the means through which we

experience and feel the world. Bodies are not passive; they act and interact with landscapes. The walker experiences, feels and thinks her movements through space and time (Robinson 1989). Bodies belong to places and help constitute them whether those bodies stay in place, move through place, or move toward other spaces (Edensor 1999, Casey 2001). The sensing body must acknowledge the material characteristics of the environment. Adams describes one representation of the act of walking as "light peripatetic." Walking as "light peripatetic" is seen as a kind of ritual where one walks with the intent of "attun[ing] oneself bodily and mentally with the universe and especially with nature" (Adams 2001: 193). I would argue that this characterization is fits what Olive Bieringa was doing as she walked/danced the 7 blocks of Nicollet Ave that were included in the 2005 version of *Go! Taste the City*. At a public showing of a short film made of the 2006 version of *Go!* that included Olive Bieringa and a second dancer Bryce Beverlin, the two answered questions that directly address this concept. When asked how they trained for this performance, Bieringa began speaking by describing the difference between dancing in a city street and in a theater environment as "the world, literally. In the world [on the street], you can't rely on the reflexes built in traditional dance training. The dance floor is not even and it may start to rain. There is so much material to work from. Once you start making choices and stop just being overwhelmed by the stimulus, you are able to work with your environment" (Bieringa and Beverlin 2006). Beverlin continued with Bieringa nodding in the background, that "before you go you prime your mind, quiet your thoughts. You feel with your senses and become more aware of them. Once you really feel them, you are able to compose from them." Bieringa ended this discussion by stating categorically that, "The world is incredibly

inspiring." This statement may sound incredibly banal, but in Olive Bieringa's case it is the foundation of her dance philosophy. She dances in the public realm because she is inspired by what she finds there.

Part of the reason the world feels so inspiring when engaged in an activity that could be labeled as "light peripatetic" is that the movement is both an emblem of sensory wholeness and at the same time "evokes a sense of the walker's environment *unfolding* ….The… sense of place can not be captured all at once,… but only over time" (Adams 2001: 194, emphasis in original). Thus a comprehensive view of the action is constructed in the mind rather than the eye. The mind processes the experiences of the senses and then assembles them into a remembered narrative of the entire trek. The surroundings and the dancers' perceptions merge to create a whole only over time. This implies that the walker, or in this case dancer, is not dominating the vision of the landscape. This unfolding of experience, I would argue, is not just of the mind but of the mind integrated into the body.

The desire not to dominate the environment also relates to the kinds of audiences Bieringa prefers for this kind of performance. Olive Bieringa prefers to perform this piece for under 20 people who were instructed to spread out by the woman acting as a "host." The audience was thus not moving as a herd, but was encouraged to move around and look from different angles, to actively see from different viewpoints. The audience thus became a part of the landscape that Bieringa was responding to. Bryce Beverlin, who performed with Bieringa in the second rendition, remembered this about the year he was an audience member, "I remember really enjoying the freedom as an audience member following along, but straying as I chose all the while blending in as pedestrian as much as possible at times"

(Beverlin 2006). This theme was continued when describing the BodyCartography dance practice more generally. Bryce stated that one of the primary aims of the performance piece was to "blur the line between pedestrians and performance" (Beverlin 2006). Consequently, even though the suits worn by the performers were a bit odd, if they were behaving "normally," no one would give them a second look. They wanted to "poke out of that" so people might not be sure if you are performing or not (Bieringa and Beverlin 2006).

Bryce Beverlin encapsulated the social and political implication of this piece in his description of it that is posted on his personal website. It is worth quoting at length.

> spending time in the american public landscape can feel naked if one thinks about the thousands of potential eyes and ears from such sources as occupied buildings, surveillance cameras, and mobile pedestrians. most people, i suspect, do not think about those watchers consciously, but rather hold themselves in a certain way in public subconsciously from years of training and societal pattern learning. to physically break away from the socially acceptable mold is at best noticeable by the others and at worst can cause severe disturbance to thoroughly established methods of conduct, especially in well trafficked areas of the city….to probe the perceptions and reactions of public persons is to engage individuals through sensory cues which may lie dormant normally. an awakening and checking of those cues allows each individual a chance to redefine and examine where they place cues and what shape those potential boundaries assume. i find this area of public performance, especially the aesthetic and intention in the dance piece 'go,' by olive birenga, to be an important engagement of pedestrian public…. creating a mixture of perception challenge and

> expression within the cityscape. to move and mold the notion and practice of public behavior –(Bryce Beverlin, "*Go!*")

The activity of dancing in a public street is not revolutionary in scale; but it can qualify as a "transgression" of public space (Cresswell 1996). The performance of *Go!* was "at best noticeable… at worst …can cause severe disturbance to … established methods of conduct." Tim Cresswell describes this phenomenon as transgression. He argues that individuals and acts that transgress social expectations of spatial behavior denaturalize dominant norms thereby subverting, and revealing, the power relationships present (ibid.). This is relevant to Bieringa's street performance in that she was transgressing "the cultural norm of where art is to take place" (Cohen-Cruz 1998; Cohen-Cruz 1994; Colleran and Spencer 1998; Flusty 2000). Mona Domosh (1998) highlights an important distinction in Cresswell's writing between resistance and transgression. Resistance is the *intended* actions of individuals that oppose power relations at some level or scale. Although the popular perception of resistance is something quite dramatic, resistance does not necessarily have to be noticed at all. Transgressions on the other hand, may or may not be intended, but are always noticed, and here lies their power. To transgress is to cross "some line that was not meant to be crossed" (Cresswell 1996:23). Cresswell's discussions of transgression focus on the outcome of the acts and not resistive intent of the participants, which limits the use of transgression in societal change (Boyer 1999). The performers of *Go!*, both Olive Bieringa and Bryce Beverlin, consciously "probe[d] the perceptions and reactions … to engage individuals….to move and mold the notion and practice of public behavior." The performance used transgression as a form of resistance to the distinction between

"acceptable" and "unacceptable" behaviors on public streets ("about BodyCartography"). The performances were intended to open new possibilities of playful practice.

Steven Flusty chronicled several individuals in Los Angeles who use play as a form of resistance (2000). Each person Flusty described is claiming and remaking portions of the city for their own purposes. In this article Flusty discusses a group of teens skateboarding their way through downtown. I find the skateboarders to be particularly interesting in light of BodyCartography's performance that I viewed because Otto Ramstad used to be an avid skateboarder. The city streets of Los Angeles are not considered the "proper" place for teens to "thrash" and various strategies have been used to police their actions. In response to the disciplining techniques used by authorities Flusty documents how the skateboarders "evolved into "pavement commandos" developing even more aggressive hit-and-run tactics to claim the space, evade capture, and, not incidentally, irritate authority" (ibid.: 154). Otto Ramstad no longer engages in the 'hit-and-run" tactics of skateboarding, but over the 10 years he and Olive Bieringa have been collaborators he has influenced the sites and textures utilized by the BodyCartography Project during performances. While many skateboarders skate at night to avoid surveillance, the BodyCartography Project chooses to perform their dances in the broad daylight, often at the times when the most pedestrians will be on the streets. These performances, including the one I documented by Bieringa, also encounter the strategies of disciplining space.

There were three clear examples of how public space is disciplined that Bieringa encountered during the performance of *Go! Taste the City*. The first was the rule that when walking on city streets the pedestrian is to stay on the sidewalk. By flaunting this dictum she

paradoxically brought it into stark relief. Bieringa's performance also highlighted how "Minnesota nice" dictates public behavior. Despite having a following audience, she was actively ignored by almost all of the accidental audience members. It is not that I think these people did not see her, but they were bound by social conventions not to watch her. Even the man walking towards downtown wearing a female Viking headdress chose not to watch Bieringa as she danced by him. His actions and outfit were "acceptable" because of the impending Vikings football game, whereas Bieringa had no such excuse. Lastly, there was direct police supervision at one point during the performance; although for whatever reason (probably having to do with race and class) no action was taken against Bieringa or her audience members. This was not the case for another street dancer in Minneapolis. In 2005 an African-American homeless man was arrested and taken to jail overnight for dancing on a downtown street (Grow 2005). If Bieringa was not wearing a business suit, and her audience not carrying expensive cameras, the police may have responded to her performance differently. As it turns out there are laws on the books forbidding dancing on the sidewalks of Minneapolis' city streets; the only actions that are legal are walking and running. This incident also points to the social inequalities of race in our society. There is a greater tolerance of whites behaving in ways that are deemed out of place by authorities than what is allowed to others, particularly African-Americans. This interest in race and the possibility of being 'invisible' in public space also permeated *Go! Taste the City*.

> there was a moment at the somali coffee place on nicollet and 15th where
> olive went in to order and talk with the workers. she was the only white
> person inside. outside the windows looking in the place were the dozen

> audience members, nearly all white. up pulls the police who know nothing of the event, but sit at the light for a bit puzzled as to why the white people are looking in the windows of the coffee place. they become disinterested [sic] and pull along. (Beverlin 2006)

Clearly if the racial division were reversed, the police would have paid more attention to the event. Bodies are restricted in cities by strategic surveillance, policing techniques, CCTV and aesthetic monitoring (Edensor 1999; Davis 1992). There is also the inevitable mixing with various social groups that occurs on city streets. DeCerteau describes how walking is tacitly used by urban pedestrians to create spaces of emancipation (1984) by composing a path, a fleeting creative inscription, which attempts to avoid the undesirable encounters and constraints. Yet when one steps beyond simply resisting the disciplining of space, and moves into transgressing those rules, then more concrete disciplining of public actions commences. Despite Boddy's claims that Minneapolis skyways do not allow for the performance of "a clenched fist, a giddy wink, [or] a fixed-shoulder stride" (1992:123-4), it was only when dancing (moving in a way that was clearly more than just "a fixed-shoulder stride") in the skyways during the *Buy Nothing* performance in 2004 that Bieringa and her performers, including myself, were told to leave by security guards. Our regular modes of walking in city spaces make the other options of how to move invisible. And yet when the other options are shown, the security guards or police silence them again.

The "disciplining" of space also has some positive aspects. Some of the norms of how to behave while walking in cities are intended to keep pedestrians from getting hurt. The injunction against waking in traffic is a classic example of this kind of rule. When Bieringa

walked into Nicollet Ave with the rock her personal safety was at risk. The cars on that section of the road regularly travel five to ten miles above the posted thirty miles per hour speed limit. Bieringa, while flaunting the rules for pedestrians, was depending on the automobile drivers to obey *their* rules—go straight, stay in the lane, and not cross the double yellow lines. This action on her part emphasized that despite the anonymity of cities and the desire of some to "not get involved," we are not atomized individuals acting in space. Members of the public thought Bieringa was in danger and took it upon themselves to try and help her. Instead of her wellbeing being a purely personal responsibility, these altruistic individuals understood wellbeing to be a communal good. This moment in the piece required that Bieringa believe this too. It required, as one audience member stated, a "will to stay within traffic. A trust of the public and a trust of her instincts" (Beverlin 2006).

Conclusion

The particular place for the performance, a seven block section of Nicollet Avenue, was chosen for the dramatic change that occurs over those blocks as Nicollet Avenue goes from a downtown hub of corporate activity to an ethnic area dominated by restaurants and groceries and the patrons of those establishments. Olive Bieringa engaged with the populations that inhabit Nicollet Avenue on a summer evening and was able to reveal how some bodies are more noticeable than others. When she behaved "normally" she was invisible, yet when she walked in the street she became the object of care and even interference. Her actions highlighted how different actors within society respond to difference, at least in this one instance. The clientele of the salon were scared of Bieringa's antics, a patron of the New Delhi restaurant joined in even after she had been thrown out of

the establishment, and the Somali men at the International Corner Café ignored her completely. Many writers who comment on moving in public space focus on the strategies involving control by means of oversight and systems of surveillance. However, the performance was seen by persons of authority (police officers), by highly transitory individuals (the cabbies), and the general public. The relationship of surveillance in this case was much more nuanced than is generally described.

The BodyCartography Project, and Olive Bieringa as its representative, transgressed the norms of city streets by adding a new practice: she danced. Her performance of *Go! Taste the City* consciously resisted those rules which bind us to normalized modes of movement. She *chose* to skip, roll, slide, and swirl down a Minneapolis public street. In so doing she brought an embodied geography to the fore, fostering an understanding of the political implications of bodies moving in space. Olive did not just move along Nicollet Avenue, she played. Play allows its participants, both active and passive, to investigate unfamiliar situations until they become familiar. As a concept, play is irreducible, yet play also demands a kind of order. Within Olive Bieringa's playful performance, the norms of the city were the structure, yet the game allowed her to spin, race, do headstands, and roll on the ground, all of which are activities that are not acceptable behaviors outside of performative experience. Yet despite, and often because of, the fact that her actions broke the rules, her play was fun. Her actions absorbed the attention of those who watched her; there was intensity to it. So much so that the people following her began to emulate Olive's actions by going into the water, entering an unfamiliar coffee shop, or crossing under fences to get a better view of her dancing. Through interacting with individuals and with the streetscape Bieringa used her

moving body to reveal bodily norms. She contrasted her dancing body to the normal expectations of a walking body. Olive Bieringa was demonstrating a light peripatetic form of being in public. She hoped to inspire the adults who saw the performance to heighten their own sensitivity to places, to playfully engage with their environments.

Chapter 3

Citizenship, Civic Memory, and Urban Performance: *Mission Wall Dances*

> 'I think it's great that Jo chose that site for one of her performances since the city streets are rarely used for dance performances. So her having done one there has actually transformed the space for me and, I assume, for many of the others who attended one of those performances. City streets NEED to be transformed in that way to make them more livable and more memorable for ALL of us!' —survey respondent

Jo Kreiter was arrested in college for participating in a public protest where she and other anti-apartheid demonstrators built and began living in shanty towns constructed on the Duke University's campus grounds (Connors 2006). After graduating from Duke in 1986 with a political science degree she moved to San Francisco because she knew the city had a strong activist community. Since that time she has used her knowledge of gymnastics, performance, and political activism to found a career that balances her twin passions of dancing and social justice. In 1996, Kreiter formed her own company Flyaway Productions. The name denotes "the emotional power and physicality of freedom symbolized by the concept of flight…. [She says hers is a] company of women and in our art we use physical strength as a metaphor for female empowerment" (SPARKed 2004: 1, 3). Kreiter expresses her personal and political principles through the work produced by her dance company. This chapter is the story of how Jo Kreiter and her small group of dancers went into the Mission District of San Francisco and expressed their concern about the effects of gentrification on

the populations there that were forced out and those that remain. It is a tale about the meaning of the past to the present.

Mission Wall Dances

Public art can be a social and political event and choreographer Jo Kreiter used the power of memory, the social narratives about her San Franciscan performance site, and symbolism to enhance the political message about gentrification embedded in her dance piece *Mission Wall Dances.* The *Mission Wall Dances* was a site-specific piece performed four times on a three-story mural in the Mission District of San Francisco in September 2002 (see fig 18, appendix A). This performance work highlighted the recent effects of the dot-com boom on the housing situation of the Mission District by memorializing an arson fire at the Gartland Apartments that occurred in the 1970s during an earlier wave of gentrification in the city. Kreiter wanted to highlight the historical displacement of countless Mission residents through various forms of eviction and the resilience of the diverse communities that have struggled to remain. The piece was specifically intended to use a historical event to comment on the more recent social upheavals that have occurred in the Mission neighborhood during the dot-com boom and bust cycle of the 10 years leading up to the performances (Kreiter 2002).

The *Mission Wall Dances* was executed by Jo Kreiter's company, Flyaway Productions. The performers included Kreiter and six additional female dancers, all young women with varied backgrounds. They were women who had grown up in San Francisco and those who had settled in San Francisco from abroad. They were straight women and lesbians, residents of the Mission District and those who commuted to the site. However, they all

shared an affinity that came from having a horror story of trying to find affordable housing in San Francisco. Over the course of the *Mission Wall Dances* each performer portrayed several personas designated by costume, spatial placement, and movement style changes. The piece also included an original music score by the San Francisco based composer Pamela Z, which incorporated the voices of local tenement residents describing escaping from hotel fires and what their current homes meant to them.

From the performances of *Mission Wall Dances*, a new sense of place was created in the performance site: one where information was combined with emotion to create among the observers a civic memory that lingered after the specific performance event was over. Kreiter used the performances of *Mission Wall Dances* as an opportunity to open a critical dialogue concerning the history of displacement in the Mission neighborhood. Kreiter was also highlighting the ability of public art to encourage debate on a cultural and political questions.

The *Mission Wall Dances*: The Place of the Performance

The "stage" of the *Mission Wall Dances* performance was dominated by a then-incomplete three-story mural painted by professional artist Josef Norris (see fig 19, appendix A). Mr. Norris was commissioned by Flyaway Production to design and then paint a mural on three sides of a storage facility and parking garage for MUNI, the San Francisco public transportation service. The mural is located at the intersection of 14th Street and Harrison Street in the Mission District, facing the back of a Best Buy electronics goods store and across the street from an Office Max. The central image of the mural is of the arson fire that occurred approximately 10 blocks away in the Gartland Apartments at the corner of 16th

Street and Valencia Street in the early hours of 12 December 1975 that killed at least 14 residents (see fig 20, appendix A).

On top of the central image, a set designer built a metal fire escape that appears to serve the burning building. The fire escape includes three vertical ladders and two horizontal surfaces directly center stage. Two other scenes are depicted on the wall: to the left of the central image is a fruit stand at night, from which its customers watch the apartment building burn. Between this image and the image of the Gartland fire, a suspended steel umbrella was hung approximately four feet from the side of the building and could be lowered to the ground. On the right of the central image, a dozen suitcase-laden urban refugees are depicted in a procession away from the burning building and toward an area of the mural painted to look like a small one-story duplex. Above the refugees a ladder was suspended horizontally at the top of the wall and locked into place by two pulleys. The set designer also had built onto the image of the duplex two hinged metal framed doorways that allowed the dancers to move on and through them.

The performance itself consisted of Kreiter and the other dancers performing as both painters of, and characters in, the intentionally incomplete mural, who were intended to showcase the cultural and social icons of the Mission District. After the performances were completed, Josef Norris completed the mural, incorporating into the final version images from the performances, including a dancer on one of the doorways and a woman suspended from the steel umbrella (see fig 21, appendix A). The mural thus acts as a permanent record of the performances, a memorial to the past, and a reminder of the recent dislocation of so many Mission District residents.

Surrounding the mural itself is the "stage" of the Mission District neighborhood. The venue of a performance matters as it provides its first layer of meaning (Schechner 1998; Carlson 1996). San Francisco's Mission District is the oldest neighborhood in San Francisco. The Mission District was named after the Mission Delores, the church built by Franciscan missionaries in the eighteenth century. It is a neighborhood with a varied history that includes Mexican homesteaders, the 49er gold rush activity, early union organizing, ethnic enclaves for the Irish, the Italians, and more recently an influx of many Latin American immigrants (Levy 1994). For the last 50 years the Mission District has been a blue-collar neighborhood of cheap homes, light industry, and several Catholic churches. However, the Mission District also has a large artistic community, a lesbian concentration, and overall a politically progressive orientation.

All of these groups have painted their histories on the walls of the Mission District neighborhood in the form of murals. In fact, San Francisco has the highest per capita output of murals in the world (Dresher 1991) and the most significant concentration of murals in the United States (Solnit 2000). The murals that adorn walls, garages, and fences in the Mission District represent art as a part of everyday life. The abundance of murals in the Mission District means that Mission dwellers are surrounded by iconic memories in their everyday-activity spaces. The residents move through stories and past heroes and legends on their way to work, church, and the grocery store. Often, the murals act to reinforce ethnic and sometimes feminist identities, to serve as a celebration of radical history, and represent a populist form of art for those who see, paint, and display them. Since the early 1970s the murals painted in the Mission District have presented political messages about the desired

outcome of neighborhood change, particularly as a way to confront and resist gentrification (Cordova 2005). The mural commissioned for *Mission Wall Dances* is thus continuing a powerful tradition in the neighborhood.

The Mission District is a neighborhood that has repeatedly faced the challenge of gentrification. Urban development and gentrification were occurring in the Mission District at the time of the Gartland Apartments fire in the 1970s (Castells 1983). This gentrification was symbolized by the opening of two Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) subway stations within the neighborhood in 1974 that were specifically designed to make it easier to get into and out of the Mission neighborhood. The transit plans also included the development of "South-American-styled" tourist attractions which would destroy local businesses particularly around the two transit stops. When informed of the development plans, community activists in the Mission District argued that the "land around the BART stations will become too valuable for poor people to occupy" (Los Seite de la Raza Organization, quoted by Cordova 2005). Many locals feared the redevelopment plans were designed to displace low income residents. The residents of the Mission District fought back by forming the Mission Coalition Organization, using grassroots activism, and nurturing a radical artist community to inform residents and resist institutional change (Castells 1983; Cordova 2005). Except for the spate of fires located near the 16th Street BART station discussed below, the Mission residents of the 1970s were largely successful at blocking the wholesale revamping of their neighborhood. The more recent residents have not been so fortunate.

The gentrification here represents a geographical, economic, and cultural reversal of the urban decline seen after World War II. Instead of this part of the inner city being the

domain of the poor and unemployed, the land is once again valuable and profitable for development as those communities that fled to the suburbs return looking for a vibrant city life (Smith 2000). The recent controversies in the Mission District surrounding gentrification are the flashpoint of a much deeper problem facing San Francisco—an affordable housing crisis. San Francisco has had the most expensive housing of any major city in the country for two decades (Solnit 2000: 14). The housing is so expensive that some argue that San Francisco may become the nation's first fully gentrified city. Over the decade from 1989 to 1998, the rents in San Francisco increased 38 percent, but the median income for renters with children only grew by 6.3 percent (Zoll 1998). And the rents continued to climb, rising by 30 percent overall in the three years of the dot com boom, 1997 to 2000. In 2000, some neighborhoods saw rent increases jump by 20 percent in just six months (Solnit 2000: 14). Some neighborhoods saw vacancy rates below 1 percent and houses selling for $100,000 over the asking price (Alejandrino 2000).

Gentrification in San Francisco is actually just one of the more visible urban changes wrought by the profound economic, social and spatial restructuring that has been happening since the middle of the twentieth century (Smith 2000; Smith and Williams 1986). "Gentrification is the shark's fin, whereas the new economy is the shark beneath the water" (Solnit 2000: 13). The recent housing prices in San Francisco are created by the geography of the city, the meteoric rise of its technology sector, its proximity to other urban areas that are also booming, and the planning processes set into motion by Mayor Joseph Alioto during his term of office from 1967-1975. San Francisco is only 47 square miles and is surrounded on three sides by water limiting the city's ability to expand. Add to this that the technology

industry thriving in the city, and in nearby Silicon Valley, creates nine new well-paying jobs for every singe housing unit built and you have a recipe for gentrification. One author specifically questioned the social ramifications for San Francisco if it becomes nothing more than a "suburb for Palo Alto" (Borsook 1999).

The rise in housing prices is transforming the nature of San Francisco, driving out the poor, working class, and those who devote their lives to less lucrative pursuits such as art or social activism (Chonin and Levy 2000; Hayes 2000; Nieves 1999). Unfortunately, the housing stock made available due to the displacement of lower income residents is often taken by other San Franciscans forced by gentrification from their own neighborhoods. Within the ensuing cruel game of musical neighborhoods, many of those at the bottom have nowhere to go but to leave the city (Borsook 1999). Underlying the changes in the urban landscape of San Francisco are specific economic, social and political forces reshaping the city. In San Francisco, Mayor Alioto and his successors transformed the transportation infrastructure, initiated redevelopment according to the Model Cites Act, and actively cultivated an international business sector (Castells 1983). All of the above factors led to the displacement of vulnerable populations in San Francisco.

The Mission District has been particularly hard hit by gentrification this time around. By 1998, almost two-thirds of the residents of the Mission District were new arrivals to the neighborhood (Borsook 1999). The population of the Mission District is more vulnerable to being evicted as gentrification changes their neighborhood because 84 percent of the residents are renters (Garofoli 2002a). Landlords can take advantage of the housing crisis by pressuring tenants to move through evictions, increasing rents beyond allowed levels,

refusing to make repairs, and outright harassment (Stoll 2002). Some examples that indicate the impact of gentrification in the Mission District are: rents in the Mission District have been raised in some cases over 300 percent in a single year, the percentage of owner move-in evictions is 7 percent higher than would be expected from the comparable citywide average, and the numbers for other legal forms of evictions are also unusually high in the Mission District (Alejandrino 2000).

The most disturbing numbers, however, come from the use of arson to evict residents of tenement hotels. In the last fifteen years, 1,651 rooms in San Francisco have been lost to fire, and many have not been rebuilt (Stoll 2002). Of those 1,651 rooms, approximately two thirds were in the Mission District. Although most of these fires have not been investigated as arson, the sheer number of fires is reminiscent of the number in years before and after the Gartland Apartments blaze. Within one year of the 12 December 1975 Gartland Apartment fire, police counted eleven suspicious fires within an eight-block radius of the Gartland site and a total of 132 fires in the two years from 1974 to 1975. Interestingly, many of the fires during this time occurred near the new BART station at 16th and Mission Ave (Cordova 2005). Correspondingly, in the four years prior to the 2002 performance of *Mission Wall Dances*, 840 residential hotel rooms were lost to fire, half of the total number of units lost for the entire fifteen years leading up to the performance (Sullivan 2001b). This alarming rate of residential hotel fires has prompted the San Francisco City Board of Supervisors to propose legislation to require hotel owners to install automatic sprinkler systems throughout their buildings (Sullivan 2001a). This ordinance represents the most significant improvement in the standards for residence hotels since 1983, when hotel owners were required to provide

heat and hot water. The sprinkler requirement was passed 27 June 2001, to be implemented by 30 June 2002. There were ongoing battles after the legislation passed to extend the deadlines for implementation (Stoll 2002). This is the context in which this performance took place in September of 2002.

The *Mission Wall Dances*: Symbolism in Motion

The dance itself consisted of three interwoven elements: virtuosic aerial movements, character studies of iconic figures in the Mission District, and symbols of remembering, forgetting, and moving on. The aerial displays included performers dancing on a ladder suspended two stories high, leaping and flipping in unison while diving off and returning to the fire escape, being hung and lowered on a giant umbrella, and, lastly, at times performing without safety equipment. One audience member described it a year later as "daring and beautiful," while another remarked on "being surprised at the absence of safety equipment." To my eyes, the movement was athletic, dynamic, and dazzling. The contrast between the freedom of flying and the rigid control of gravity through the rigging highlighted a suspension of reality and the contrast between safety and surrender.

The acrobatic movements were seamlessly integrated into the first third of the performance, which consisted of the dancers performing character studies. The performers on the ladder were dressed in white painting overalls and were the first characters in the dance. These dancers performed virtuosic actions but also "painted" from the ladder, listened to Spanish language music, and, according to Kreiter, were intended to document the working class character of the neighborhood (Kreiter 2002). Another icon of the Mission District included in the performance was the Latina woman who goes from shop to shop and

restaurant to restaurant selling beautiful flowers to make a living. A single performer dressed in a yellow floral dress, dancing on the top deck of the fire escape, represented this persona (see fig 22, appendix A). This performer's movements were jerky, as if she were tired: she wiped her brow, sat down to rest, looked for someone, and returned to cleaning her flowers. There was a beauty and fragility in the symbol of the flowers as they dropped to the ground as the flower seller danced. The falling flowers conjured images of the more recent Latin American residents who are gone and will not be able to come back.

In the final character study, two dancers portrayed lesbian lovers lost in the Gartland blaze (see fig 23, appendix A). During this section the music included a slow sultry salsa, sounds mimicking crackling fire, and the recorded voices of tenement residents describing the fire's heat, the panic of escape, and then the cold night air while standing on the street watching their home burn. The dancing in this section took place on the central platform of the fire escape. The dance was a very sensuous salsa, with the two dancers in physical contact for the entire section. The duet included one dancer hanging from the platform above, the other dancing on the top of the platform's railing and even using counterweight techniques to incorporate movements in the open space in front of the landing. The two women were not anchored by wires and thus needed each other to avoid falling. Through the use of music, imagery, and movement the duet symbolically tied together two major communities in the Mission District, the Latin and the lesbian communities.

The symbolism in the dance centered on remembering, forgetting, and moving on from the fires. Kreiter commemorated the victims of the Gartland Apartments fire through her use of neighborhood icons and was embedded in the character studies mentioned above.

The first third of the dance presented symbolic characters representing those who lived, worked, and died in the neighborhood at the time of the Gartland fire, in the forms of the painters, the flower seller, and the lovers. After the character pieces, the dance moved into a long section in which water was used as a symbol of forgetting and recovery (see fig 24, appendix A). This section of the dance involved dancers on top of the building and on the fire escape holding broken umbrellas, doing a series of flips and dives in unison, which carried their bodies away from the fire escape and towards the audience. Finally, a slowly spinning dancer was lowered from the roof to the ground suspended on a large metal umbrella.

The section on water was different than the earlier section because it was more abstract. There was no direct referent for a woman suspended from an umbrella. Despite this fact, it is at this point in the dance where the political undertones begin to clearly show themselves in the piece. The water does more than just stop the fire, it washes away the debris. Water has the power to heal the anger in the community by washing away the anger and resentment and letting the community begin with a fresh start. But the negative aspect of this symbol is that it also symbolizes the "collective amnesia" (Garofoli 2002b) of San Francisco, which has forgotten the poorer residents of its communities in the past. Jo Kreiter has stated that one of her main purposes for doing this piece was to tie the more recent controversies over gentrification in the Mission District to the long history of displacement that she believes has often been overlooked by more recent activists (Garofoli 2002a). Thus, the water is a symbol of healing while providing a cautionary note not to let members of the neighborhood be swept away by time and evictions, to be forgotten.

In an effort to remind the audience of the aftermath of displacement, the final third of the dance dealt with the transition and resettlement of populations after a tragedy. It began with a duet performed by the same women who had earlier portrayed the lovers, but now, instead of closeness, the audience was struck by their distance from one another. One woman was on top of the building above the image of the burning Gartland Apartments, packing and unpacking her suitcase in quick, frenetic movements that gave the audience a sense of panic and indecision. Her partner, on the other hand, was suspended from a wire above the lines of people pictured in the mural walking away from the burning building and toward a single-story home. This performer, leaping and flipping, ran back and forth on the wall with a suitcase in her hand. At some points the two women moved in unison, at other times the movement of one quieted so the other could have the audience's attention. At other points in their duet, the two performers almost competed with one another for the audience's attention as it was difficult to keep both women in the same visual frame. I believe this was intentional on the part of Kreiter, a way of reminding the audience that we can not see all of the suffering that is happening around us; we just have to make a choice and watch one dancer, knowing that we are missing something on the other side of the performance space.

The last section of the dance focused on recovery. It took place on the left side of the mural where a single-story home was painted about 10 feet off the ground. Attached to each of two adjacent doors painted on the home were a steel door frame that could swing out and a narrow platform. The two women, who began the show as the painters, now literally scaled the wall to reach the doors and began to dance on these movable, swinging doorframes, transferring between doors and interacting with each other (see fig 25, appendix A). This

section provided a utopian vision of what home is and of what neighborhoods should be. In this section the women were not rigged; instead of the fear and neediness conveyed by the lack of rigging for the lovers earlier in the performance, these dancers supported each other from a place of kindness and community. For the first time in the piece, the two performers smiled at each other as they swung across and traded doors. Despite all the negative images that had interspersed the dance to this point, the audience was left with a positive image of the aftermath. Home was a wonderful place, and neighborhoods are our homes. I think it is significant that the 'home' at the end of the piece was a single family dwelling rather a return to an apartment building. In this dance the displaced achieved the American dream of home ownership, and were better off for it.

Citizenship and Performance

The struggle highlighted in Jo Kreiter's *Mission Wall Dances* is based in the community activism of residents in the Mission District against gentrification. The artists made political claims on the public realm to tell the story of the Gartland Apartments fire and by association the more recent residents evicted from their homes. Kreiter was using her political science and feminist background to link the "arts and civic life" (Duke 2006). The broader conception of political art in public space discussed in the introduction opens up new physical spaces for political action and the dissemination of information. The performance by Flyaway Productions of *Mission Wall Dances*, claimed such a political space for itself by challenging social processes through which individuals and social groups are represented in and excluded from public spaces. Kreiter's *Mission Wall Dances* includes claims to citizenship, inclusion, and engagement. Citizenship is no longer defined solely by one's

relation to the state (Holston and Appaduri 1999; Pocock 1995; Mouffe 1992; Lummis 1996; Barnett 2004). In these writings, among others, citizenship has taken on a broader relational form, in that it can include one's relation to the particular circumstances of one's environment, as well as one's relation to others. Being a citizen in this estimation involves much more than just voting once every four years. Citizenship requires an active, politically engaged polity; one that is constantly struggling to direct and shape its fate (Mouffe 1992; Little 2002; McCann 1999). This broader conception of citizenship opens up new physical spaces for political action and the dissemination of information. The performance by Flyaway Productions, by fomenting public debates surrounding cultural and political questions, claimed such a political space for itself by challenging social processes through which individuals and social groups are represented in public spaces.

Urban spaces are articulated as groups within the city appropriate, use, and give meaning them. Cities are particularly important sites for active citizenship because a city can be imagined as a field of competitive and cooperative relations among individuals (Isin 2002; Brodie 2000; Holton 2000). The history of a city can be read in the spatial relationships of the city's forms and places (Gregory and Urry 1985; Lefebvre 1996; Sorkin 2000). The analysis of city landscapes can provide information concerning the value systems and actions of those who historically occupied that city (Gunn and Morris 2001). Consequently, the struggle among competing groups to define and appropriate the spaces of the city, to place their identity in the history of the city, is crucial to each group's insistence of the right to make a city its own. Lefebvre saw the right to claim and occupy the city as an expression of urban citizenship, understood not as membership in a single polity, but as an active practice

of articulating, claiming and renewing group rights through the creation and appropriation of spaces in the city. *Mission Wall Dances* was a performance that appropriated a city block for two weekends in September of 2002. Jo Kreiter and her dancers were claiming their rights as urban citizens to express their concerns about the changes in the Mission District brought about through gentrification. They were articulating, and performing, the history of one arson fire as a means to show the archeology of the more recent conflicts about displacement. For Lefebvre, the right to access and use the city is the physical manifestation of a series of rights: the right to movement, to individualization and socialization, and to inhabit the city (Lefebvre, Kofman, and Lebas 1996). The right to claim a city's spaces is thus the right to democratize the city (Mitchell 1995).

Baz Kershaw argues that, by engaging urban space through performance, new understandings of the space can be produced, creating a space where politically democratic communication can take place (1992). Public performance transforms the urban setting for the viewers. The new understanding, of the issue and the site, may be mobilized in the construction of a symbolic 'us', a sense of shared identity amongst those who shared the experience. In building this sense of community, the context of the *Mission Wall Dances* performance is just as crucial to its success as the form and content of this particular artistic expression. This is so because, when an artist ventures away from a gallery showing or the proscenium stage, an entirely different relationship between the artist's work and the public is created (Martin 1990; Kershaw 1992; Handke 1998).

This change in relationship between art and the public is one of the foundations of John Dewey's writing on the democratic potential of art. Dewey argued in 1934 that the

separation of artistic endeavors from other forms of human communications renders the true significance of the artistic experience 'almost opaque' (Dewey 1934). For Dewey, art needed to be in the public realm and accessible to all for it to reach its full potential. Thus, having the *Mission Wall Dances* performance in public place where no admission was charge was important to its ability to build a sense of community. However, for a performance to be successful in its role of transforming the sense of place in a site, a performance must be more than just a cosmetic intervention in a public place. The performance of *Mission Wall Dances* was able to merge the individual experiences of the audience members with common societal interests through imagery and symbolism. In the process, Jo Kreiter and her dancers were bridging the so-called public/private divide.

Performance has the potential to straddle the public/private divide because it is, like citizenship, both personal and shared. The emphasis on the common and social determinants of performance is what gives performance its communicative potential. Jo Kreiter used her audience's societal and thus shared perceptions of 'home' to communicate the devastation of losing one's home to fire. This emphasis on how personal understandings are related to communal concerns gives performance its political potential. The desire to connect the choreographer, the audience, and the political potential in art has led many contemporary performers, like Jo Kreiter, to see the radical potential of returning the arts from exclusive locations to the everyday lives and spaces of people (Burham and Durland 1998). While not turning away entirely from galleries or proscenium theaters, some socially conscious performers have redefined their communities by creating their art with at-risk youth, in prisons, in hospices, or just in their neighborhoods. These artists, including Jo Kreiter, are

consciously choose to invest themselves *as artists* directly in the public, thus becoming an integral part of that public. When they do, the performances produced become a reflection of the particular culture in which they were created.

The irony of this movement towards "community based art" is that an artist being an integral part of a larger community is not new. "Socially committed, community-engaged artists add depth to our culture and re-enchant their chosen publics, coming back to the reason why art was ever important in the first place" (Burnham and Durland 1998: xxiii). The artist as a fully engaged citizen is a concept that reinvigorates art in the public realm. One audience member stated this same idea when he wrote, "I remember being there, sitting on the pavement, on a sunny afternoon, it being a gathering point for many people I knew and more I didn't." He understood the potential power of the community being formed by the performance as a "gathering point."

Everyday Life, Memory and Politics in Performance

Public performance has the ability to transform public spaces. Jo Kreiter's *Mission Wall Dances* produced a community through an urban performance. The performance itself was ephemeral, collective, and grounded in the everyday lives of the audience members. The performance of *Mission Wall Dances* explicitly used symbolic images in a political manner hoping to build a community for change and possible action. They did this through (re)writing the memory of that locale for their audience. This performance specifically intended to help modern audiences identify with the history of the Mission District neighborhood that is often forgotten or unknown, showing a relationship between the gentrification issues of the past and those in the present.

The voices of audience members a year after the performance show that a long lasting connection was made and the political intent was communicated and remembered. While the audience may have initially experienced the space of the performance passively, over time their imaginations actively made symbolic use of the spatial objects in the site, such as the mural. The audience members were not a homogeneous group, there were differences in emphasis and understanding of the various themes Kreiter was addressing. The performance challenged the social processes through which the individuals and social groups featured were excluded and forgotten from public spaces. *Mission Wall Dances* was a performance that both evoked and created memories. It was a site for "community" to form as one group dramatized the cultural history of their neighborhood. Flyaway Productions opened a space for the exchange of information and public debate surrounding the direction of the Mission District neighborhood.

There were two audiences for the work that had the potential for community creation: those who actually came to the *Mission Wall Dances* event, and those who became aware of the issues and subject matter of the dance although they did not attend the performance. The dance received extensive media exposure, including an article and photo on the front page of the Bay Area section of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the major daily newspaper in San Francisco, on the day of the first performance.

The audiences of the *Mission Wall Dances* ranged from 250 to 400 people at each show, and I consistently received completed surveys back from about 10 percent of each audience, for a total of 117 surveys across three performances. The audience members sat in a closed-off street and looked up at the painted wall while leaning against the back of Best

Buy. According to my surveys, almost one third of the people who attended the performances had heard of the event through mainstream media outlets. Approximately half the audience had heard about the performance because of past involvement with Flyaway Productions or Intersection for the Arts, the primary sponsoring organizations. The final group of attendees was the smallest and consisted mainly of people who passed by the mural on their way to work, school, or shopping and had stopped to ask what was happening during the rehearsal process. Eighty-seven percent (99 out of 115 who answered this question) responded affirmatively when asked if seeing the performance changed their perception of the place where the performance was held.

The audience members who returned surveys were predominantly white, although one person commented in the follow-up survey that he remembered "that the audience was a great diversity of ages and ethnicities and that [the groups present] seemed to follow what the act was about." Many audience members initially mentioned coming to the performance because they like to support local art projects while others attended specifically because of the subject matter. It is interesting that the audience members would comment on the diversity in the crowd and yet highlight their commonalities (either through supporting public art or housing issues activism). This, along with comments I will detail below, lead me to believe that one of the main results for those attending the performance was the reinforcement of their sense of belonging to a community amongst those who believed themselves to have similar interests.

Civic life is embedded in the collective processes of creating memories, representations, and visions of the city (Belanger 2002). Performance, as an activity that can

both evoke and create memories, is thus a site for "community" to form as groups dramatize their cultural history for the enjoyment of insiders and outsiders. The associations made between the performance and its neighborhood location in the minds of the audience members can be viewed as giving the city shape and meaning. Memories of one's city are infused with history, both personal and shared, and thus play a constitutive role in urban social life. A sense of civic identity, at both an individual and group level, can be generated through the recollection of the events and characters that make up the history of one's city. Yet civic identities and memories associated with them are a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in a community's history (Sturken 1997). Thus the history of a place is remembered through the stories that are told about it, how and by whom these stories are told, and finally which story in the end becomes dominant (Massey 1994; Hoelscher 1998; Foster 2000; Lippard 1999). Hence public memory is inherently political. By memorializing the victims of a single arson fire, Jo Kreiter's performance of *Mission Wall Dances* created a history of this event for those who have none, thereby building a counter-narrative to the story of displacement and disappearance.

All memories are created in tandem with forgetting (Sturken 1997). History is an end product of the process where particular memories, details and voices are forgotten in favor of remembering others. Memory is thus a part of the narrative of an experience rather than a replica of the experience. The instability of memory is what makes it both political and subject to debate. The important question is not necessarily, "Is a memory true?" but rather, "What does the reliving and retelling of the memory reveal about how the past is intersecting with the present?" The production of civic identities in space is fundamentally related to how

the public realm and history are constructed (Pile and Thrift 1995). The act of being an audience member to a specific event can create a common bond and feeling of solidarity among the witnesses. This is true of the international audience watching the buildings of the World Trade Center fall on live television on 11 September 2001 or, on a much smaller scale, those audience members watching Jo Kreiter's dancers hang from the side of a building reenacting the dispersal of residents forced from their homes by arson.

Memory is often perceived to be located in specific places or objects (Sturken 1997; Foote 1997; Till 2001). However, places are not passive receptacles of cultural memory. Memory is produced through the meanings attached to objects and images and then emplaced in particular locales. Particular places become sites of memory through the act of producing and/or sharing meaning items in them. Performance is a shared event that can act as a catalyst and receptacle for individual and collective memory. When responding to my follow-up survey one year after the *Mission Wall Dances* performance, one audience member stated:

> I have a really good memory of the piece. I remember the music very well… I can remember all of the sections of the piece. The woman in white coming down on the umbrella apparatus, the two women hanging off the doors, Jo with the black trench coat and the suitcase, the Latin dancing sequence on the fire escape, the bluish [sic] outfit on the redhead at the top of the building with the water spraying… the roses…I remember it was very well attended and that cars stopped to watch. I remember seeing little kids, especially little girls trying to dance off of the road blocks imitating the dancers.

The images remain as the compelling items of memory for this audience member. This coincides to the key observation by Yi-Fu Tuan who "argued that the actual material object is not what is meaningful but rather the human experience it reifies" (Till 2001: 276). It should be noted that the physical object, particularly the mural that was commissioned for the piece, is also a compelling object of memory. A different audience member remarked how s/he drives through the Mission District neighborhood "and reminisce[s] when I spot the mural. I've had a few dreams since of the wall dances." Yet memories, and the spaces associated with them, are not a simple script. They are variable, unstable, and subject to contestation.

The "technologies" of memory are social practices that are inevitably implicated in the histories of those who view the event and then make associations and memories (Sturken 1997).

> If I hadn't seen the performance and known the political and social issues attached to the performance, I would write off the mural as a mediocre attempt at socially relevant public art.

In this case, the mural became associated with the issues gentrification and displacement because of the performance. The mural alone would not have been meaningful to the above audience member. This impermanence is crucial to collective memory's cultural function as a site of the political. It is precisely the instability of memory that allows it to denaturalize the everyday and render what had been assumed visible for reevaluation (Moran 2004). As another audience member noted:

> I think about [the piece] anytime I hear about an apartment fire (I'm a teacher, and one of my students last year lost his apartment to an apartment fire in the city.)

Kreiter's *Mission Wall Dances* was a memorial in response to the tragedy and resilience of the population of the Mission District neighborhood of San Francisco. The audience was guided through a series of visual and kinesthetic images, which, after the performance ended, left a void in which each person was able to create memories, filling in the blanks with their own experiences, associations, and imagery. For instance, one audience member remarked:

> One thing that left an impression on me for months happened after the show was over. People were starting to move away from the alley and towards Harrison. I was still sitting there with my friend, taking it in, enjoying the sun and the people walking by. I saw an elderly woman walk by holding the arm of an even older woman. The older woman walked very tentatively, even resisting the pull of the first woman, leaning back from her arm. The younger old woman said, "C'mon! Stop pulling. You have to walk." The older old woman continued to shuffle and resist. The first woman turned to the second and said, "What's going on? Why won't you walk?" The first responded, "I'm afraid I'll fall." I'll never forget that. After watching an amazing hour long feet [sic] of gravity and grace, feeling so awestruck and anxious about the dancers reeling on the wall, the old woman's comment made me recognize that our

> experiences are all so different and unique. It was remarkable, even if I'm not capturing how much so here.

In the case of this audience member, the most important memory evoked was not actually related to the Gartland Apartment fire, or arson fires at all, but about the frailty of the human condition. This memory was profoundly meaningful to this audience member yet could never have been predicted by Jo Kreiter as she rehearsed her piece. The memories created by the performance of *Mission Wall Dances* did not create "real" memories of the Gartland Apartment fire or even its aftermath, but it did allow the audience to create memories of the performance that were significant to them. It should be noted, however, that most of the audience members who answered my surveys did directly connect the past history of the fire to the present in their memories of the piece.

> Seeing this performance was a great experience, just knowing that there is more in life than just the mundane hustle and bustle of surviving in this city, and not only that it was Free. It was nice to see that from a terrible fire/tragedy that people were able to pay tribute in such an elegant way.

Kreiter's *Mission Wall Dances* created a new sense of place by inscribing the displaced and forgotten onto a wall in the form of the mural and into the memories of her audience. When displaced residents are represented in public space, their community is also claiming the right to be in the city, to not be forgotten or displaced. In looking for new spaces of citizenship, Chantal Mouffe (1992) is calling on us to recognize the power of these kinds of lived experiences to the sense of identity of those who live in a city. The democratic ideal requires attention to all aspects of society, including art. Performance is a viable avenue for

participation in public life. The key to the success of the performance, however, is to understand it in its physical and social context, namely the relationship of the piece to wider networks of meaning.

This understanding of why the piece was successful was borne out in the follow up survey that I conducted a year after the performance. This survey only included fifteen respondents. However, of those fifteen, fourteen reported that their perception of the performance site was still changed from before the so-called ephemeral event. My survey results may be skewed because of self selection. Yet even if only those who were deeply affected by the performance chose to respond, it is important to note how long-lasting the impression of a meaningful performance is to some members of the audience. From the follow-up survey it was clear that supporting local public art and the subject matter were still important to audience members' memories of the piece:

> I thought it was a really fascinating use of public space, and an innovative and beautiful dance form. I love hanging outdoors with friends, especially at some public activity or event (like a street fair, Carnival, etc.) and I especially love doing it in the Mission District (and especially on a nice day!).

> The site, the technical rigging and the mural all added to the performance. It allowed the dancers to evoke a sense of freedom, even though they were tethered to the ropes. The sense of flying and freeness in movement is the foremost symbolism that I came away with. There was grace and beauty of movement.

However, other aspects that gained prominence over the intervening time were: the evident sense of community, the importance of the mural as catalyst for memory, and the idea that the line separating art and everyday life was erased during the performance. Respondents explicitly remarked on how important that sense of community was to their enjoyment of the *Mission Wall Dances* performance piece.

> I've since moved to Seattle, so not much contact or connection recently, although I have lots of friends and family in San Francisco, so I feel a connection to the city as a whole.

> I came with my partner and a good friend who had never heard of Jo and her group and she was absolutely delighted with the event. I met several friends of mine in the audience as well and that, too, delighted me knowing others I knew enjoy this kind of performance as much as I do.

The audience also responded to the site itself. In particular, the presence of the mural acted as a reminder of the issues addressed by *Mission Wall Dances*.

> The site is what gave the performance its uniqueness! I pass that building often and I like the way they've now painted the dancers on the wall, as if they left their shadows there.

> I'm glad that I hadn't ever seen that space before, and that it had no other connections, because now when I see it, I always connect it with seeing that performance.

> I think it's interesting that they tried to leave some performance residue by painting the dancers in to the mural….
>
> The Mural is a Great addition to the neighborhood.

Yet the comments on how art was brought into everyday life were the ones that really impressed on me the importance of artists engaging with political ideas in the public realm. These spectators incorporated the performance into their daily lives as individuals, family members, and citizens. A sense of immediacy and connection was evident in all of these comments:

> I loved being on the curb as an audience member. There was something so authentic about the experience...being outside, with noise and cars and weather and clouds overhead...the line between art and life faded for that hour.

Conclusion

Thoughtful analysis of works of art requires a deep understanding of the context in which they are set. The context of the performance is just as crucial to its success as the form and content of a particular artistic expression. The urban form of San Francisco's Mission District has changed over the years. Some buildings have been painted and others have burned to the ground. The Mission District has been altered by wider economic forces that influenced housing, transportation, and demographic patterns. Gentrification has always been resisted in this neighborhood, and occasionally even been beaten back. However the speed and ferocity of the housing price spikes in the last wave of gentrification were impossible to stop until the tech economy bottomed out. Nevertheless, the arts community resisted throughout. Jo Kreiter's *Mission Wall Dances* was an example of this resistance. Kreiter used

icons of the neighborhood such as the Gartland Apartments fire, the Latina flower seller, and the mural itself to *place* her art explicitly into the dialogue on gentrification of the Mission District. The place of the performance mattered.

The relevance of public performance, however, does not come exclusively from its location, but rather includes its engagement with civic life. The performance of *Mission Wall Dances* became a dialogue between the physical site, the specific subject matter, and the experiences and memories of the audience members. Thus the back of transit garage became a memorial after it was incorporated into the *Mission Wall Dances* performance and a nondescript corner ten blocks away took on a new meaning for those who did not know its history. The act of making this portion of the Mission District's history visible in public space changed the sense of place for many of the audience members. This change was clearly articulated by the audience members surveyed a year after the event. However, it was not just an understanding of the site that changed. The places of importance to the Mission Wall Dances performance were also infused with a sense of togetherness and of civic life built on these communal experiences. The audience re-incorporated these sites, their histories, and the new associations into the communal memory of the neighborhood.

The site was appropriated and used by the muralist Joseph Norris and choreographer Jo Kreiter to articulate a message of remembrance and hope. They used paint, emotion, sound and incredible athleticism to take their audiences to a fire that burned over thirty years ago. The Gartland Apartments fire and its aftermath were an allegory for more current concerns about gentrification in the Mission District and a shortage of affordable housing in San Francisco more generally. By building a sense of community that linked the past with the

present the performance of *Mission Wall Dances* gave new meaning to an urban landscape. The images and ideas present in the performance commingled in the minds of the audience creating, not a real memory of the fire, but another frame for understanding information learned about gentrification, tenement hotel fires, activism or evictions. This performance left an indelible mark on a wall in the Mission District of San Francisco, but also left its mark in the memories of its witnesses.

Chapter 4:

Re-visioning an Urban Landscape: *Solstice River*

> The fundamental efficacy of ritual activity lies in its ability to help people embody assumptions about their place in a larger order of things.
>
> Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*

Solstice River

Every year on or near the 21st of June, over 4000 people tune into portable radios and watch the free outdoor performance that visually dominates the historic Milling district of downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. This annual site-specific performance by Marylee Hardenbergh is called *Solstice River* and is intended to honor the Mississippi River on the longest day of the year (see fig 26, appendix A). *Solstice River* has been performed on and around the historic Stone Arch Bridge crossing the Mississippi River at St. Anthony Falls since 1997. The dance is designed to be a celebration of the Mississippi River and an educational event about water quality. This dance would be impossible to perform without the cooperation of US Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam. Hardenbergh is also the artist-in-residence at Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education, which provides logistical and financial support. Even the music that was composed by J. David Moore is simulcast annually on a local jazz radio station so that everyone can hear it. I attended the performance three consecutive years from 2002 to 2004, and performed in it the summer of 2003. The year I performed in the piece, the

music was actually presented live a few miles up the River at a local jazz festival which was then broadcast on Cool Jazz KBEM.

The performance is viewed from the top of the bridge and encompasses a full 360 degrees. The performance involves dancers on the locks, dikes and staircases of St. Anthony Falls, on mooring cells in the middle of the Mississippi, throughout nearby Mill Ruins Park, and on surrounding condos rooftops and balconies. Additionally, dancers are placed on river barges that pass beneath the stone arches, and, if the river is quiet, kayakers join the fray paddling and rolling in time to the music. In an effort to aid the spectators' ability to see all the elements in this performance, the costumes and props are made with bright colors, the movements are expansive, and much of the dancing is in unison. The performance is an opportunity to educate and reconnect residents of the Twin Cities with the river. This chapter examines how *Solstice River,* as a performance, is able to revision the site through manipulating the space to change the audience's understanding of the neighborhood and the Mississippi River.

Marylee Hardenbergh's work is explicitly informed by the relationships between natural history and human history. *Solstice River* is inspired by the grandness of the Mississippi River and the historic importance of St. Anthony Falls amidst the modern man-made structures designed to control and harness this force. Audience participation and environmental education materials are the tools she uses to orient her audiences to the cyclic patterns of nature. She conceives of the *Solstice River* within "a huge geographic circle, with the setting sun at the western edge, that allows the audience to feel surrounded by the performance" (Hardenbergh quoted in Lefevre 2003-2004: 24). Hardenbergh has referred to

her dancers as a moving constellation surrounding the audience. As the audience follows the movement from downriver to upriver to the banks and surrounding buildings, the space is no longer a vast, undefined area. The dancers become beacons of energy, color and light that give structure to space for the audience (Combs 2004). The piece always ends just as the sun sets with all the performers dancing in unison. Hardenbergh describes the moments of unison in her piece as "primal and unifying. The synchronicity equalizes everyone and allows them to feel connected. It creates very quickly a sense of togetherness that goes beyond words" (Hardenbergh quoted in Lefevre 2003-2004: 24).

Visions of the Performance

In the piece *Solstice River*, choreographer Marylee Hardenbergh plays with the audience's sense of vision and perspective. The communicative potential of this performance is based on its ability to affect the audience, to make them feel the distance, the motion, and connection. Performance is an aesthetic experience that affects us; it agitates directly (Dewey 1934). This communication involves much more than just the art itself (the dance) and the perceivers (the audience) (Berlant 1970). Immersed, but not subsumed in this communication process, is the role of vision. The choreographer has a vision of the piece, which then helps determine the choice of site and performers. In dance, the performer tries to embody the choreographer's vision but is not a mere puppet for the choreographer's wishes. The choreographer and performers each have a role in making choices regarding how the initial vision will be enacted through movement, tempo, music, attitude etc. The audience then also evaluates the content and context of the piece which are filtered through their individual biographies. Thus the 'vision' expressed by the choreographer is mediated at many stages as

a performance piece moves from an idea to a physical reality. The choreographer's, in this case Hardenbergh's, vision is the driving force behind a dance piece, but it is not the only significant vision of the work.

Artistic vision, as an act of imagination, is thus not the only 'vision' of importance to a performance piece. The audience and performers experience a dance performance through the act of seeing, through vision. Audiences watch the performance, while the performers watch each other and the audience. In fact, outdoor performances are often designed so that the maximum number of people will notice, and thus see the event. These performances are spectacles in the landscape (Tuan 1990). The spectacle of it emphasizes the separation of the audience from the performers and allows for the spectators to stand apart and view the performance in its entirety. This is exactly the kind of relationship to vision that is often criticized, particularly within feminist geography (Cosgrove 1985; Rose 1993; Harley 1992; Davis 1999). It is a view from on high, in the case of the Stone Arch Bridge—quite literally. Geographers have cited how vision and visual representations become associated with what Haraway (1989: 91) calls the 'god-trick,' the oppressive power relations hidden by traditional disembodied, 'neutral' objectivity. And here lies the difference between the audience at *Solstice River* and the vision implicated by the 'god-trick;' the audience in a live performance is *always* situated. In this case, individual audience members are positioned along a bridge watching other individuals dance. Sightlines change according to where you are on the bridge, who is nearby, and what area of the site is the focal point for that moment. Despite the audience being able to 'see the performance in its entirety,' it is an inherently a partial vision, embodied vision, an embodied knowledge.

Within feminist geography there have been calls to reclaim vision for a feminist purpose (Law 1997; Nash 1996; Ford 1991). Beyond women confronting a 'masculinist gaze,' Nash (1996) in particular argues that geography should pursue

> "more effective critiques of particular representational practices… through the more demanding and complex task of understanding images through specific contexts of production and reception which include but are not finally determined by the representational tradition to which they belong, evoke or work through" (151).

This means understanding a work of art as a socially grounded practice, not as an autonomous artifact. Looking at a performance site in this manner involves acknowledging that, "we never look at just one thing: we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are" (Berger 1972: 9). Hardenbergh intended to make a dance that brought a landscape, an urban vista, down to the scale of meaning and the scale of place.

Secondary Visions

The importance of meaning in how residents view urban landscapes is why 'visioning' has been incorporated into the planning processes of many cities (Oregon Visions Project 1993).Visioning in this context is a process of including citizen engagement in city planning that involves a variety of interest groups within a community coming together to reach agreement on common vision of the future (Klein 1993). Proponents of visioning believe creating a shared image of a preferred future will create plans that "resonate with

citizens' deepest aspirations and values" (Ames 1996:2). Some urban geographers have been critical of formal visioning processes, arguing that government organizations go through the motions of including constituents rather than truly engaging with the communities in a meaningful manner (Dear 1986; Dear 1989; McCann 2003). However, even if a community's "visions give way to the reality of finance[s]" (Hagerman 2005: 4), the very act of going through the process and seeing their neighborhood in a new light opens up new possibilities for the future. Choreographer Marylee Hardenbergh, through her performance *Solstice River*, is building a new vision of a once dilapidated section of Minneapolis.

The Stone Arch Bridge as Site of Performance

Why over the river?

This annual performance is a site-specific work that is informed by the site's topography, history, and natural and built environments. These features are filtered by choreographer Marylee Hardenbergh's sensibilities to create a piece of performance. In creating site-specific work for the last 17 years, Hardenbergh has consistently sought out unusual and overlooked urban environments (Lefevre 1996). After the successful reception of her work *Urban Sky Harvest* (1991), which involved five dancers, five cherry picker trucks, and their operators celebrating "the cyclical rhythms" in life by performing on the autumn equinox under a full moon at the Farmer's Market, Hardenbergh expanded her craft to address major environmental issues ("about Marylee"). As a longtime resident in a home that overlooks the Mississippi River, a piece set on the river was an extension of her interest and concern for the water quality in her own backyard. *Solstice River* is intended not only entertain its audience, but to inform them as well. The Mississippi River, like many rivers, is

polluted from runoff from farming, logging and municipal uses. Water quality on the Mississippi is directly related to how people are using the land in riparian areas. As more roads, parking lots and homes are built, the ground is covered with more impermeable surfaces, and thus more rain and snowmelt reaches the rivers through storm sewers. As farmers convert wetlands into acreage for crops, more soil, fertilizers, and pesticides enter the waterway. In both the urban and rural examples, the pollutants that previously had been filtered by soil and plant life are now added directly to the watershed. This is crucial information for residents of the Mississippi River basin, since the river supplies the drinking water for many of these residents, including the city of St. Paul and over a million residents of Minneapolis and seven of its suburbs (Meersman 1999a).

While it is true that the water quality in the Twin Cities is a reflection of local activity, because of the fact that rivers flow, a particular site's water quality is also indicative of the land uses upstream. This interconnection of riparian communities was officially acknowledged in the Clean Water Act (1972). The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has used this federal law to effectively regulate point sources of pollution, such as industrial plants (Sovell 2006). Currently the primary challenge to upper Mississippi River water quality lies in the sediment run-off from rural areas and in urban non-point sources of pollution. One key to reducing these forms of pollution is changing the attitudes and behaviors of residents living near the river (Meersman 1999a; Meersman 1999b). Consequently, Hardenbergh uses her performance as an opportunity to educate her audiences about urban non-point pollution.

While the performance itself was a celebration of the river, she adds to the educational experience by including a detailed and scientific program, interactive poster displays on sources of non-point pollution, and a walking map along the length of the Stone Arch Bridge. The front page of the program handed out at each performance included the usual features such as the sponsors, title, date, choreographer and composer. It also displayed two less usual items that inform the audience about the purpose of the performance. One portion was a statement signaling the ritual aspects of the performance discussed in detail below. The other unusual item included in the program was text on "The Life-Source—Water" that lays out the educational purpose of performance:

> Along with honoring the longest day of the year, *Solstice River* also celebrates the reclamation of the Mississippi. Improving and maintaining the river is a huge challenge, but the special kinship of the river to its people here is irreplaceable. It will require all of us working together to ensure that this challenge is met and exceeded. Join us in the commitment to preserve clean water for our future.

Deeper into the program was information on the science of the solstice using the position of the sunset over the Minneapolis skyline as seen from the bridge as its visual model. Sections of the program include information on the history of the site, specifically St. Anthony Falls, the Stone Arch Bridge, and a history of the health of the river passing beneath the audience's feet. The very last segment of the program was also unusual in that it requested action from the audience after the completion of the piece. This piece was a pledge the audience could

make to become a "watershed partner" by reducing their personal contributions to pollution in the Mississippi River.

The more detailed information on non-point sources of pollution and how individuals can stop adding to the problem were found at the interactive displays located at the western entrance to the bridge. These displays included two oversized tables each with a three foot tall visual display board that was informative to the casual passerby and brochures from several local water quality organizations (see fig 27, appendix A). Some brochures were very dense and detailed; some involved pictures for children to color, and others were quick lists of "what you can do." The range of formats that the information was presented in was intended to reach as many audience members as possible.

In addition to the performance, program and poster displays, a walking map of the Mississippi River was created along the length of the Stone Arch Bridge. The length of the bridge was divided into segments where 1 foot of bridge length equals 1 mile of the river. The audience members could thus "walk the length of the River" as they walked the Stone Arch Bridge. This walking tour went all the way from the source of the Mississippi at Lake Itasca to its meeting of the sea at the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way various placards were posted allowing audience members to "visit" communities along the Mississippi's route learning about the water quality issues in those areas—an ingenious use of the physical site of the Stone Arch Bridge. Hardenbergh was making connections for her audience between their actions and the water quality not only of their local community, but also of their downstream neighbors.

By performing on the river in the historic milling district of Minneapolis, she is targeting the residents who need to know this information. In a GIS map I had made of the zip codes of those who filled out a survey during the performance in the year 2004, the majority of respondents came from zip codes that share a border with the Mississippi River. This is interesting because in the Twin Cities area because a large percentage of the regions zip codes do not border the river (see fig 28, appendix A).

A City Develops along its River

The location of this performance is the Mississippi river, but not just any bend in the river. The Stone Arch Bridge crosses the Mississippi river just below the most abrupt drop in the river's entire 2,200 miles course from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. Currently, the "waterfall" is beneath concrete and dwarfed by the city it helped build. It is thus difficult to see the falls, much less comprehend its historical importance. The waterfall gave Minneapolis its name. "Minneapolis" actually means waterfall city (Twin Cities Public Television 2005). These falls are the reason for the placement of the city of Minneapolis, MN.

The falls cascade over a 16 foot precipice that came to be known as St. Anthony Falls. The falls include a cataract in the river. Above the fall the river is 667 yards wide and below the falls the river is only 209 yards across (Kane 1987: 5). A sixteen foot drop might not sound particularly impressive, especially if you are comparing it to the straight drop at Niagara falls in New York which is 70 feet down. However, the drop in elevation at St. Anthony Falls is actually greater than the river drop that furnished the power for the Eastern industrial city of Lowell, MA (Kane 1987: 15). Geographer David Lanegran discussed the falls as a site where you "can see power" (Twin Cities Public Television 2005). Water power

was well developed as a technology in the east and the falls at St. Anthony was ideally suited for waterwheels. Adding to the potential to be gained from St Anthony falls was the forested land that began a few miles north of the falls and was larger than the state of Maine. The falls were located at a very strategic location between the great pine forests of the north and the prairies of Minnesota's south that would soon need that wood. It was clear that whoever controlled the falls would control the processing of the resources done there.

The first sawmill at the falls was built on the west bank of the river by soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Snelling (at the time called Fort of St Anthony) in 1821 ("History"). The first gristmill was completed by the soldiers two years later. In 1838 a local entrepreneur named Franklin Steele gained control of most of the territory east of the falls. He applied for a township plat and began to build the town of St Anthony around a budding milling industry. By 1856, Steele and his partners at the St Anthony Water Company had built a large commercial sawmill on the eastern bank of Saint Anthony Falls. The west banks of the river were still under the control of the fort and were not open to commercial development until 1849 when Robert Smith was granted a lease of the governments saw and gristmill ("Engineering"). In 1953 Smith was able to purchase the land and went into business with several others to fully develop the west side of the river. The west bank of the falls was developed by a different company than the east bank, the Minneapolis Mill Company, whose most famous founders were the Washburn brothers. By 1860 the west bank was completely built up as well and included a canal. While the saw mills were the primary economic force along the falls at this time, grain mills, mechanic foundries, and textile factories also shared the banks of the Mississippi River with the lumbering mills.

Steam power and the circular saw in the 1860s-1870s allowed for more lumber to be processed at St Anthony Falls. At its peak in the early 1900s, the edges of the river near the falls were barnacled with sawmills, with 15 mills on or near the falls (Kane 1987). To facilitate the movement of logs and the creation of more power the river was diverted out of the main and into canals. The industrialists were thinking about profits not nature when they divided the river. The falls were made of a top of hard limestone covering a much softer Sandstone base. The change in the flow hastened the erosion of the sandstone layer and a portion of the falls collapsed. In 1870 the US Corp of engineers built a wooden apron over the falls and the falls have essentially been buried ever since under the commercial landscape they built ("Engineering"). The falls are still buried, it's just that now the curtain over the falls is made out of concrete.

In 1876 the power company owned by the Minneapolis Mill Company decided that due to the wasteful use of water, along with other issues, the sawmills were to be closed. In 1887 the last two saw mills were razed (Kane 1987). The saw milling district moved further upstream into an area still dominated by industry, an area now known as north Minneapolis. As sawmilling was losing its grip on St. Anthony Falls, grist milling was ascending in power. The flour mills controlled an area three blocks long and little more than 1 block deep (ibid: 101) By 1876 almost every site within range of the power of the falls was utilized. The Washburn A Mill was completed in 1874 and was intended by its builder, C.C. Washburn, to be "the finest flouring mill in the world" (ibid: 102). Unfortunately, a major fire and explosion just 4 years after the mill opened killed 18 workers and destroyed one-third of the cities milling capacity in a single night. The entire milling community rallied together and a

larger mill, which is currently home to the Mill City Museum, was built the following year and completed before the end of 1879. In the 1880s, Minneapolis was the flour milling capital of the nation, mainly powered by the water power produced by the falls. By 1905 the economy of Minneapolis was no longer totally dependent on the milling and manufacturing district at the falls; even so Minneapolis was still the largest producer of flour in the US at the turn of the last century.

A Bridge Below the Fall

The performance of *Solstice River* takes place on a historic bridge that is the only one of its kind over the Mississippi River. The bridge is made of locally quarried Platteville limestone and measures 2100 feet long and 28 feet wide (Mississippi National River and Recreation Area 2005). The bridge was built by railroad baron James J. Hill for his Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway (later the Great Northern Railroad Company). James J Hill was also the president of the St Anthony Falls Water Power Company on the east bank of the falls through most of the 1880s (Kane 1987). He was interested in both water power development and railroad building. The railroad bridge was intended to build tracks that would connect the flour milling district with the new union Depot being built at the intersection of Hennepin and Nicollet Avenues.

The Stone Arch Bridge was completed in 1883 (Borchet 1983). Originally, the plan for the bridge was a shorter and cheaper bridge above the falls; however the chief engineer Charles Smith said constructing above the falls could cause the collapse of the falls, and the resulting loss of the waterpower's resources. So instead the bridge was built aligned with the sweeping curve of the falls which gives the bridge such visual drama (see fig 29, appendix

A). The local materials proved strong, durable, and able to withstand the weight and vibrations of trains until it was closed from railway traffic in 1965. The very last train crossed bridge in 1978 when the bridge was completely shut down (Wagner, Joder, and Mumphrey Jr. 1995). At that point, the few abandoned buildings that remained from the milling era were near the Stone Arch Bridge.

When the Upper St. Anthony Lock was constructed in early 1960s to facilitate upstream river traffic, some of the original features of the bridge were removed and replaced with steel trusses ("Engineering"). However rehabilitation of this National Historic Engineering Landmark did not begin until 1980. Minneapolis, like many other cities, experienced a building boom in the 1980s, yet the milling district was largely neglected except for the railroad tracks being removed in early 1980s (Wagner, Joder, and Mumphrey Jr. 1995). The building boom in the milling district did not begin until the early 1990s, after the Washburn A Mill caught on fire. Nina Archabal, the director of the Minnesota Historical Society, saw and seized an opportunity to redevelop the historic milling district next to the St. Anthony Falls (Pennefeather 2003). In conjunction with Minneapolis Mayor Donald Fraser, Archabal was able to solicit funds to reuse the mill as a museum about the city's milling history (Mack 2003). In 1994, after meticulous refurbishing, the bridge reopened as a pedestrian and biking bridge. It is now a unique structure that draws walkers, bicyclists, and tourists to enjoy the view. From the middle of the bridge, an observer can see the expanse of the falls and imagine the district in its glory years as the center of the milling economy. The bridge is now a key link in the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail, which is a two mile hike or

bike trail with extensive signage detailing the history of St. Anthony Falls and the surrounding Milling District (Minneapolis Riverfront District 2005).

The entire neighborhood surrounding the Stone Arch Bridge got a facelift from the 1990s onward. In the 1980s, the area was considered a seedy neighborhood, known for homelessness and crime. I grew up in the Twin Cities and remember during the 1980s that the milling district of downtown Minneapolis was not a safe place to be, even during the daytime. This image has been completely reversed. Now the riverfront is a thriving community dotted with million-dollar condos. Near the bridge is the new home for the Guthrie Theater, the new Mill City Museum, and the North Star Lofts where the cheapest unit sold for $98,500, and the average selling price was closer to $345,000 (Mack 2003). By the year 2008, it is estimated 800 to 1000 new residents will move into the neighborhood centered on Portland and Washington Avenues which is one block from the entrance to the Stone Arch Bridge. In buildings that used to house only pigeons and bats there are now condos which sell for approximately $2.5 million dollars. There is also a thriving community on the east bank of the River across the Stone Arch Bridge. Transforming the Stone Arch Bridge into a pedestrian friendly walk and bikeway has been a major influence in redeveloping this area. One major difference between this site and the area utilized for the San Francisco dance piece is that the recent changes in Minneapolis are defined as redevelopment, rather than gentrification. Aside from a small transient community of homeless persons, there was not a human presence in the area prior to its redevelopment; instead, it was a region of downtown encased in chain link fences and no trespassing signs. There have been some concerns that housing prices near the redevelopment would rise on the

east bank, an area largely dominated by students at the University of Minnesota, but if this has happened it has been reported in the mainstream media outlets of the Twin Cities.

Re-visioning the Milling District as a Site of Performance

In understanding the power of *Solstice River* you have to imagine the scene (see fig 30, appendix A). You are standing on the historic Stone Arch Bridge on a warm June evening. You can see the falls on one side of the bridge and the flowing Mississippi continuing on its way from the other. Despite being in downtown Minneapolis, the dominant sounds are the water, the seagulls, and the other audience member's voices. Everyone has portable radios or is clustering around the radios distributed across the bridge by Hardenbergh. The 'stage' surrounds you 360 degrees; there will be dancers on locks, dikes and staircases, on mooring cells, throughout the Mill Ruins Park, in and on boats in the river, and on surrounding rooftops and balconies. As an audience member, you stand over the moving water while watching the whole basin come to life with color. You are exposed to the elements and can see how the wind or rain changes the dancer's movements and costumes. You are engulfed in a spectacle that seamlessly weaves the human and the natural.

The dance itself begins at 8:35 pm with the sounding of the horn of the lock, which is answered by a trombone player standing on a spit on the other side of the river. This onsite beginning overlaps with a trombone that begins the music being broadcast over a local radio station. At the sound of the horns a group of six women begin walking the length of the bridge from the east bank towards the lock in a single file procession. Following the 'women of the water' along their journey down the bridge is another performer carrying a yellow disk that has the shape of the Mississippi as it flows through the Twin Cities on it in blue. The

women of the water are all dressed in white flowing dresses and carrying different sized flasks of water (see fig 31, appendix A). The specific symbolism of the water in the flasks changes every year. Some years all of the water comes from various spots around Minnesota, other years the water is to be collected by each woman, taken from a source that is important to her personally. In all years, however, this is a portion of the performance where the performers are expected and able to contribute to the dance in a way that is meaningful to them personally.

As the horns sound and the women of the water begin their trek, the dancers who will be placed on the dike, in Mill Ruins Park, and on the buildings begin to get into position. As they become visible to the audience, these dike dancers and those in the Mill Ruins Park begin 'calling' to one another across the spans that divide them. These performers are costumed in bright, almost neon, full-body unitards. They begin to move with a series of large, also brightly colored, triangles (see fig 32, appendix A). The triangles represent navigational signs. The dancers in this first section use the triangles to pass movement between themselves in a kind of call and response manner, or more accurately patterns of move and response. At the end of this portion of the dance, all of the bridge dancers put down their triangles, generally into pyramids, and pick up large round disks of bright yellow fabric which represent the sun (see fig 33, appendix A). The fabric is stretched around a circular frame so tightly it looks like the top of a trampoline. One interesting thing about these sun disks, however, is their ability to be folded over into a smaller disk, approximately half the size of the fully opened disk.

It is at this point in the dance that the rooftop dancers, who had been visible but completely still, begin to move and join the other dancers. Over the course of two minutes (which sounds short but can be a very long time in dance) *all* of the dancers are joined in a simple, yet elegant, phrase swirling their small suns above their heads, and around their bodies. This is the first chance that the audience has really had to notice the dancers who are located in spaces very far away from the bridge (see fig 34, appendix A). After a couple of minutes of unison with the small suns, all at once the dancers pop open their disks to their full size and the unison movement continues. The phrase changes as the movement possibilities of the 'new' prop are constrained by how the large suns can catch the wind. Overall the movements with the large suns stay closer to the body yet maintain an expansive and dramatic look. Probably the most striking movement done with the large suns does not actually follow the movement limitations just described. At one point towards the end of this section all of the dancers are spinning these large suns over their heads like their hands were the inside a giant spinning hula hoop. It is truly beautiful to be surrounded by the movement of those bright yellow disks spinning so quickly above all of the performers (see fig 35, appendix A).

At the end of the phrase with the large suns, the dancers on the rooftops recede again into stillness and the focus of the performance returns to the dike and Mill Ruins Park. The dancers put down their suns and begin to execute a jointly created phrase choreographed during rehearsals. This section begins with a cannon, where each dancer or group of dancers begin the movement phrase at a set interval, leading to a visual wave of movement up and down both banks of the River. Eventually the dancing coalesces into unison once more. The

last movement of the communal phrase in unison is picking up the large suns again. At this point, the dancers on the dike and in Mill Ruins Park begin their own processional to walk in towards the bridge with their large suns. This procession brings the focus of the audience back in close to the bridge where streamers are being lowered to the ground below by performers located on top of the bridge. After these long streamers are caught by a performer on the dike, that dancer ran it down the dike eventually attaching it to a bollard along the length of the dike. This process is repeated with seven streamers (see fig 36, appendix A).

There are many little details tying the performance to its site that many audience members would probably miss if they were not noted on the program. For instance, the bags that contained the streamers lowered from the bridge are old flour bags from Gold Medal/ General Mills and Pillsbury—two of the milling giants still visible from the bridge. While the long streamers are being attached to the dike, the other dancers on the dike and in Mill Ruins Park took out short individual streamers, from four to six feet long, and made of the same materials and colors as the costumes and sun disks (see fig 37, appendix A). These streamers are spun by the dancers in a manner that forcefully reminded me of some forms of Chinese dance that include ribbons creating patterns in the air.

As the unfurling of the first wave of long streamers comes to its conclusion, the five dike dancers who had been performing with the shorter streamers move to the other side of the bridge and get into position for the next section of the dance. The audience is thus directed to the upstream side of the bridge. The five continue their streamer dance but this time they are running up and down the stairs leading to the lock walkway. The stairway, which does not look tall from the bridge, is the equivalent of a five-story building's walkup.

As landings are reached the dancers stop and perform more intricate movements with their ribbons before they are off and running again. The dancers in this section have a set pattern of movement that is repeated until the women of the waters are in position for their section of the dance. Once it is clear the women are in position the stair dancers turn toward the women and go still.

After completing their journey across the bridge the women of the waters reach the walkway above the lock. There they are joined by the trombone player who plays a horn rift in the music, again tying the mediated music to the onsite performance. Once on the walkway, the women of the waters have a series of movements they do together that Hardenbergh describes as "joyous and rejuvenating." The movements match the music; both are slow and slightly otherworldly. As the women move, the large metal door to the lock slowly opens. At the climax of this section, when the door is fully exposed, the women step forward and altogether pour their waters into the Mississippi River. A single stream of water falls 50 feet to the water below. Once the water is poured the lock door begins to close and the other dancers around the site prepare for the finale.

The finale consists of kayaks, streamers, and dozens of flags. Immediately after the water has been returned to the river, the kayaks are launched from the upstream side of the river. The kayaks roll and paddle in time to the music, they also shoot through the arches bringing the audience back to the downriver side of the bridge. At this point four more long streamers are sent out (see fig 38, appendix A). Two of these streamers are long enough to reach the Mill Ruins Park where they are attached to bollards. One of these super long streamers is 400 feet long. The other two streamers are released to flow in the wind. The

dancers who do not have a streamer to attach have by now picked up a large flag of brightly colored material (see fig 39, appendix A). There is a fairly long series of movements that is done in unison for over seven minutes. The dancers on the rooftops do the phrase for the longest period of time since they begin as soon as the second series of streamers is initiated. The Mill Ruins Park dancers then get into position and join the roof top dancers. Finally, the dike dancers who had to run down the entire length of the dike get into position and join the unison movement. Usually there are at least two minutes of true unison at the end. The unison sequence is relatively simple to learn, but from afar the combined symmetry of all the dancers moving together would impress a marching band director. The last note of the music coincides with the flags coming to a sudden stop, and the sun setting behind the horizon (see fig 40, appendix A). The time is 9:03 pm.

At the conclusion of the piece, the audience is invited to directly participate as the "Blue Highway" is unrolled. The Blue Highway is a 1,400 foot expanse of blue fabric that is unfurled off the back of a Parks and Recreation truck covering two-thirds of the length of the bridge. The audience becomes the riparian sides to the highway as balls are bounced from one end of the fabric to the other (see fig 41, appendix A). The spectators on the bridge become viscerally connected to the flow of the river through the creation of communal waves. Throughout the entire performance the audience is actively involved— filling out surveys, moving back and forth on the bridge, through the blue highway, and finally by their changes in action.

Ritual as a means to revision

In the case of this performance, the particular process of re-visioning does not involve the traditional community meetings associated with the planning procedures; instead, it is an annual ritual of gathering and celebrating that integrates the community with its surroundings. Ritual is ordinary behavior transformed by means of condensation, exaggeration, repetition, and rhythm into specialized sequences of behavior that serve specific functions within a society (Schechner 1996: 228). Ritual and theater are described as the poles of efficacy and entertainment. However, the distinction between usefulness and amusement is rarely so clear. "Whether one calls a specific performance ritual or theatre depends on the degree to which the performance tends toward efficacy or entertainment. No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment (Schechner and Schuman1976: 206). Changing one's perspective can thus change a performance's classification. If you come to *Solstice River* one time and never read any of the literature available, it could be enjoyed as pure entertainment, but, as one looks more deeply at the performance, the effectiveness of the ritual comes into focus.

Rituals are not isolated events. They are nested within a particular cadre of supportive structures (Schechner and Schuman 1976). In fact, Marylee Hardenbergh is a member of a New Mexico-based group of artists called the International Center for Celebration, which strive to "rediscover… and redefine… the role of ceremony within community" (Ash 1992). Hardenbergh actively creates ceremonies that reinterpret a site or space. "My approach comes directly out of dance therapy" (Lefevre 2003-2004). "To me it's the drawing together of dichotomies. I like the idea of softening the urban environment, of feminizing concrete" (Freese 1992: 1). Hardenbergh's body of work illustrates a desire to build a shared sense of

wonder and fleeting community solidarity through this community ritual, marking the passage of time. As Hardenbergh explained, "My dances are primarily about rhythm, color, harmony, and most importantly the beauty of movement. *If* people get a spiritual message, all the better" (Ash 1992: 7, emphasis in original). This thought was also expressed in an interview Hardenbergh gave soon after completing her first performance on the Mississippi River, the "dance really has a transformational energy….It helps transform spaces--- people will never look at these mooring cells the same again" (Mabery 1990: 5). She emphasized the spiritual message in the program handed out at the performance as well, including on the front page a statement "Celebrating the River of Life:"

> A philosopher said that you cannot step in the same river twice. Our life flows onward in the same way. We cannot live the same moment twice. Yet as the Earth circles around the sun, each season comes faithfully. We note the passage of time by marking them…winter, spring, summer, fall. We begin the cycle again.

Through a repetition over years, the *Solstice River* performance has become a tradition in some households (mine included). One Minneapolis resident audience member from the 2003 performance explicitly noted that "going to *Solstice River* every year" helps create a "very connected" feeling to the Mississippi River. A change in perception occurs as the public ritual is fulfilled. "Spectators have remarked, 'Downtown is no longer such an unfriendly place to me…' and after six years, 'every time I cross that bridge, I still see the performance happening'" (quoted in Ash 1992: 7). One of Hardenbergh's favorite stories to explain her audience's perception of the piece is to recall a woman who called her after the

very first performance on the mooring cells to thank her, "for giving the Mississippi River back to the people." Hardenbergh told me this story, and I saw it repeated in numerous articles written about her site-specific work (Lefevre 2003-2004; Combs 2004). I believe this account is important because it was early acknowledgement that the intended connections were being built. The performances on the Stone Arch Bridge were answering a fundamental need for interaction among people and place. This performance changed the place.

Dance critic Camille Lefevre argues that Hardenbergh's work fills a need for public ritual in our culture. The role of the choreographer in public ceremonies is similar to a shaman; she chooses the site, organizes its meaning into symbols, movements, and forms, and then invites her audiences to witness and participate in the event (Lefevre 2003-2004). Hardenbergh surrounds her audience by placing solo dancers far from the audience on the rooftops of buildings so "they are so tiny, which is really how big we are in our world" (ibid: 24). She is reminding her audiences through a use of the site that underscores the scale of the body that even in an urban environment humans are surrounded by nature. Hardenbergh's dances resonate with emotions that lie far beneath the relative safety zones of reason, time and daily consciousness. Dance in the ritualized context of *Solstice River* is the unnoticed made visible and experiential. The power of rituals lies in its capacity to awaken imagery within us and to illuminate common mysteries without reducing them to the commonplace.

Hardenbergh brings this sense of ritual and common imagery to her choreography. Similar to the "women of the waters" who are encouraged to bring personal affiliations into their role as water bearers, Hardenbergh believes that each of her performers, regardless of previous dance training, has worthwhile contributions to make in the performance. I

experienced this first hand when I agreed to be a "dike dancer" in the 2003 performance. As a performer I can attest that Hardenbergh truly does use "a very democratic form of creating movement" (Lefevre 1996: 67). The first step of creating the primary movement for the entire dike section was sending the dancers out onto the site to improvise and see what emerges. After the performers had some time to build a segment of movement, Hardenbergh had each dancer teach the others their movement. As the choreographer Hardenbergh blended and modified the particular movement phrases so that they can flow easily from one to the next and everyone in the group can physically execute all of the movements. I contributed to this phrase and learned the final version, although in the end I did not end up performing it in the performance piece. This collectively created movement phrase is done in unison and is thus a part of building community solidarity within the wider performance piece.

We all practice rituals, even simple ones that get us out the door in the morning, While personal rituals calm us and keep us moving, Hardenbergh believes that *public* rituals give "us a sense of timelessness that plugs us into the entire web of community.… As community members, doing specific actions with others gives us an experience of shared intensity and depth of commitment that is unknowable on our own" (Lefevre 2003-2004: 25). *Solstice River* symbolizes and actualizes a change in the river, the annual calendar, and the community. By taking place at the liminal moment between day and night, and between spring and summer, it puts emphasis on the moment of change. Through the communal experience of being a spectator in this dance event Hardenbergh hopes to change her audience and thus the river. The performance does more than just celebrate the river, it

affects what it celebrates. Audience members reported being affected emotionally and being moved by the performance to change some behaviors that impact the river. Thus the performance actually changed the river in a small way.

While it is true that a modern performance like *Solstice River* will never duplicate the dances and rituals that once rooted people to their places (Tuan 1974; Schechner and Appel 1990), this dance approaches that fundamental need for interaction among people, performance and place. By transforming a bridge into a place of contemporary ritual and celebration, Hardenbergh is slowing down our fast-paced technological society in an effort to reconnect the audience to their surroundings and restore a sense of purpose (Lefevre 1996; 2004). Movement, particularly within rituals, has an ability to express emotion, forge connections, and tell stories. Hardenbergh is telling a story of healing—for the river and the community at large. Hardenbergh wants her audiences to have a "heart response" to the river while watching her performance. She believes that as people learn to love the river they will want to take care of it. Yi-Fu Tuan called this affective bond between people and places topophilia (1989). In ordinary activities, humans are rarely conscious of how our bodies form patterns and rhythms, or how our bodies command space. Instead we focus on space and time in order to make calculations concerning practical needs. "In ritual and theatre, people are … far more conscious of their relations" (Tuan 1993: 238). The performance of *Solstice River* created political community in a public space that was specifically designed to highlight the relationships between the riparian communities and the Mississippi River and to build a connection that leads the audience to take action to protect the River.

Overview of Available Survey Data

I had seen the dance performed the summer of 2002 and decided to include it in my study. As Hardenbergh was already planning on conducting a survey and agreed to share that data with me, I arranged to perform in the piece to get an insider's view. After I performed with the company, I realized that performing was too all encompassing for me to properly observe the interaction between the performance and the audience. Because of this I chose to return the summer of 2004 for a third round of observations. For this chapter I had access to the survey data from 2003 and 2004, which were provided by Hardenbergh. In 2003 the surveys were interview-based and 73 surveys were collected, with no demographic information included. In 2004, the questions were more quantitative, included demographics, and 133 surveys were collected at the performance site. In order to elicit the kind of qualitative responses received the previous year, I wrote a follow-up survey to the 2004 performance and sent it 6 months after the performance to the 68 audience members who provided an email contact address. At the beginning of this process, the yearly surveys were conducted in isolation so it was difficult to document longitudinal changes in audience perceptions due to the improvements made to the educational aspects of *Solstice River's* presentation. In consultation with Hardenbergh, I proposed hiring a specialist to build a database for the Solstice River Project that would enable these kinds of comparisons to be made in subsequent years. I gave a copy of this database to Hardenbergh so data received from surveys could be easily recorded, coded, and added to in upcoming years. The report I did analyzing the 2004 data was used by Hardenbergh as a part of her grant from the McKnight Foundation. Another aspect of the database that was attractive was the ability to

sort and analyze data in new ways. In particular, the database allowed us to commission a density map of the attendee's zip codes to get a better sense of the draw of the performance (see fig 28, appendix A).

Profile of the 2003 Survey

A total of seventy three people responded to the 2003 survey. However sixty-seven answered the initial question which asked the respondent to rate the *Solstice River* 2003 performance. Sixty-eight percent of those who responded rated the event very favorably, giving the performance a four or higher on a five point scale. When asked what the audience member liked "best about the performance," a variety of aspects were mentioned. Some of the most common features mentioned were particular aspects of the event such as the flags, ribbons, or streamers, or the dancing, dancers, or music (all total approximately 35 percent of responses). These aspects are somewhat predictable. What I found more intriguing was that 20 percent mentioned that the sense of connection they felt and awareness of the river was what they liked best. Fifteen percent liked the feeling of a shared sense of community best. While another 10 percent specifically mentioned being outside, on the bridge, or being along the river as their favorite part of the performance. Even though this question was asked in a manner that could allow for a narrow interpretation, 45 percent of the audience respondents were moved enough by the overarching themes of the performance to pinpoint them as what they liked best about the performance.

The next question on the 2003 survey asked if the performance affected the audience member's feeling of connection with the Mississippi River. Over a third (27) of the respondents indicated that the performance had positively affected their feeling of connection

to the river. And approximately 16 percent (12) responded that it had not. Another finding was that approximately 20 percent (15) stated that they already felt a close connection to the river. This feeling of previous connection was reinforced by the performance by several respondents. Several audience members also mentioned that they experienced an increased sense of connection "to the community" as result of the event. Many respondents did not answer this question directly, rather stating things like "I was honored to be living so close to the river" or "the vast, open, free mixing of elements at the site created quite a giddy feeling in me."

When asked "what helped make that connection?," the most common answer related to the location of the performance being on the bridge, at sunset, or along the Mississippi River. Other audience members mentioned the information they had learned. These responses included reference to the program, the walking map, and talking with people along the bridge about river pollution. Related to this last statement was the common thread that the connection was made through the creation of a sense of community. For some audience members (see above) this was a generic "community," while for others it was defined as a community of people who value the river. One audience member even mentioned seeing the entire pagan community of the Twin Cities at the event. While it is likely that this particular observation was an overstatement, "community" was an ever-present theme in the survey responses.

I was surprised that this sense of community was brought up repeatedly even when the audience members were asked in what ways were their attitudes about water quality changed by the performance. While it must be noted that the largest group (27 respondents)

indicated that their attitudes were not likely to change, it is interesting that this is the same percentage of respondents who above stated that the performance had created a positive connection to the river. Another 18 percent said that their positive behaviors were reinforced and their importance emphasized by the event. Approximately 14 percent believed they will be more aware of their daily actions and what goes into the watershed. Another 14 percent were more aware of waste disposal issues than they were before the event. One audience member stated that s/he would be "more assertive when I see pollution." Amongst those who reported a change in attitude the most common reason given, even though it was not specifically asked for, was that sense of community. Audience members stated they "understood the river better," "appreciated their part" in pollution control and were "ready to go clean it up!"

It was clear upon looking at this data that as an artistic event the performance was a success. What was interesting was that it was stronger as a community event than as a teaching tool. The educational elements were effective for those who had little knowledge of issues of water quality but many of the audience members were already committed to water quality and thus they learned very little from the event. I believe this potential negative was offset by sense of community the event created in the audience members. Even those audience members with strongly held environmental views prior to the performance stated that the importance of continuing their positive actions towards the river was reinforced by the performance. Amongst these individuals there was a very clear sense of being with like-minded individuals, those who care about the river. While it may be argued that this is "preaching to the converted," there is evidence within psychology that reinforcing positive

behaviors is beneficial to creating positive outcomes (Weigand and Geller 2004; Daniels 2000; Geller 1995). People need praise and when they get it they are much more likely to continue those behaviors (Shushok and Hulme 2006; Hannon 2004). While it would be good to bring the environmental message of this performance to an entirely new audience, there are also advantages in reinforcing the sense of belonging among those who already act to take care of the river regularly.

Profile of the 2004 Survey:

The respondents for the 2004 survey consisted of a total of 133 respondents. Of these, thirty-five percent were male, fifty percent were female, and fourteen percent did not identify themselves as either sex. The largest percentage of the population was adults 35-54 at approximately 55 percent of the audience. The next largest group was the young adults 18-34, at thirty-one percent. There were very few children or older adults surveyed although from visual examination of the audience there were many children in attendance to the performance. The majority of respondents were white, 78 percent, which roughly corresponds to the general demographics for the city of Minneapolis. The other groups listed were Latino/a, Asian-American, African American, Native American, Indian, and two percent reported their race was not listed on the survey. Nine percent of the respondents declined to identify their race on the survey.

When questioned why they attended the performance in the initial 2004 survey, 47 percent (63) of the respondents did not consider the chance to learn about the river as important in their decision to come to the event. In contrast, the ability to attend a free family event was ranked as important or very important by 54 percent (72) of the respondents. Sixty

eight percent (90) answered that the fact that it was a dance performance was important to their decision to come, and the largest percentage (at 68 percent) thought attending the performance was "a great way to celebrate the solstice."

In the initial 2004 survey, 71 percent of the respondents (95) reported having a strong or very strong connection to the Mississippi River, yet very few (38 and 32 respondents) said they would swim in or drink water from the river. The respondents were fairly savvy in their knowledge about sources of urban pollution to the Mississippi River. Fifty-four percent of the respondents (72) did know that the storm drains in the Twin Cities flow to the Mississippi River. However, a total of forty-six percent (61) of the respondents did not know this basic water quality fact. This number also included a full seventeen percent (23 respondents) that stated they had "no idea where the drain went." Roughly two-thirds, 68 percent, of the respondents were familiar with non-point sources pollution such as rainfall run-off carrying pollutants from land, streets, and rooftops into the river. This is important because the majority of respondents, 56 percent, thought that residential homes, yards, and driveways contributed more to the pollutants in the Mississippi River than any other source of urban rain run-off. However, like in the 2003 survey, the performance of *Solstice River* was not only reaching those who were already committed to water quality and already knew the answers to these questions. The 2004 surveys indicated that there was twenty-three percent of this year's surveyed audience that did not know when pollution enters the river.

Most respondents in 2004 were aware of personal actions they could take to reduce pollution to the river, activities such as sweeping their driveways of lawn debris, disposing of household hazardous waste in an appropriate manner, not flushing medicines down the toilet

and avoiding placing phosphorus fertilizers on their lawn. They were less aware of the effects of washing their cars on the street or the importance of keeping their vehicle well maintained as having impacts on the river.

The 2004 Follow-up Survey

Of the 133 original respondents to the 2004 survey 51 percent (68) of them provided us with an email for further contact. Seventeen percent (22) only gave us a telephone number and thirty-two percent (43) gave no contact information. In conducting the follow-up survey we decided to administer only an email survey because of cost. Of the 68 email surveys that were sent there were ten responses (seventeen percent). Although this is a very small sample size, the respondents to this follow-up survey comprised a broad range of audience attitudes since they included some glowing responses and some people for whom the performance did not resonate. The most interesting answers to me were ones that supported the 2003 results, particularly that audience members reported changes in behavior even when previously they had felt "informed" on ways to protect the Mississippi River from urban pollution. These findings contradict the idea the ephemerality of dance as an art form.

Most of the audience members who returned the follow up survey (eight of the ten) reported having regular contact with the Mississippi River, and five reported having regular contact with the Stone Arch Bridge. The forms this contact takes include walking, jogging, or biking along the river, living near it, and, in one case, assessing nearby properties. Even with these other associations, the respondents remembered the performance as a site in itself. When asked specifically what they remembered about the performance site the comments included the height and volume of the river, the people present for the performance, the

bridge as a dramatic landscape, the information on the pollution in particular river communities as posted in the walking tour, the juxtaposition of the river and the buildings along it, and the history of the site. The aspects of the performance that the respondents remembered most were the "size of the setting" and the way Hardenbergh used it, the water rite, the colors, the "flowing material" around the site, and a feeling of "connectedness" to the river. Six respondents said that the site and performance were connected in their memory; reasons for this included the association of industrial plants with pollution, the performance in itself, and the appropriateness of the setting for a solstice celebration. The four respondents who stated that this connection was not present; the reasons for this included the performance not resonating with the respondent and other, stronger associations with the area.

Over half of the respondents (six) explicitly remembered information that they learned during the program, on the program or from the displays. Some of the comments included information on ways to conserve water and reduce non-point pollution, especially runoff from yards and roads. Some of these answers were very detailed, one respondent noted that "[t]he displays, many of which I read were highly informative about non-point pollution and the connection between urbanization and the loss of potable water…" another "remember[ed] something about a "dead zone" at the river delta in the Gulf of Mexico that's being created by all the residential pollution (more than industrial)."

While four respondents remembered little to none of the information as something 'new' they learned, 3 other respondents reported having a greater respect for the river and the challenges it faces after the performance and another three reported specific changes in their behavior, including talking with friends and neighbors about their water use behaviors,

washing their car on the lawn and making an effort to sweep grass and leaves off the street and sidewalk and onto their lawn. Within the subgroup that did not change their behaviors after seeing the performance, two of these individuals reported that they either had previously been making an effort to conserve water or had no behaviors that fell into the questionable categories asked about.

What is so interesting about these data is that although most respondents felt a connection with the river prior to the performance (eight of the ten), six of these individuals did view the river and, more importantly, their behavior towards the river differently afterwards. And half of those individuals reported that the changes in their behavior were directly related to the performance. I believe that the program and displays were effective in supporting the 'learning potential' of the performance. In fact one respondent actually responded to the question if they remembered information from the performance, program and displays with "Yeah! What a neat learning device. ☺" It was only in a follow up effort that the actual changes could be measured. In the 2003 survey the sense of community was the strongest element noted by the respondents, yet the follow up survey in 2004 documented how this sense of community was actualized into changed behaviors in at least a few audience members. The sample in 2004 was small and should not be overstated, yet even those who were familiar with water quality issues learned new things and took action on this knowledge. This is a finding I hope Hardenbergh will pursue in future surveys and expand upon.

Conclusion

Hardenbergh is embodying social values through an artistic interpretation of nature. She uses dance as a means to celebrate and educate a portion the city she lives in. In the performance, educational displays, programs, and the *Solstice River* event bring a new vision of the riverfront to the audience. Before the performance there are booths where the audience can gather more information about the health of the River and the communities along its banks. During the performance, there is a joyous sense of hope that enlivens the Stone Arch Bridge, and after the dance there are calls for the audience to act on the information learned. Each audience member becomes a participant in the event, and thus it is hoped that each audience member will deepen his or her commitment to the Mississippi River and their local community.

As was shown in the San Francisco piece *Mission Wall Dances,* memories can be inscribed in the landscape through a single dramatized performance. *Solstice River* emplaced memories in the minds of its audiences through the creation of a ritualized tradition repeated yearly. However, performances are lacking one of the foundational arguments for the power of public memory, a means to cement their permanence. For instance, monuments are designed to be permanent, whereas a performance is inherently ephemeral. It can be difficult for politically inspired choreographers to find a method to effectively convey their concerns in a manner that will stay relevant for their audiences. Two of companies discussed, Flyaway Productions and Global Site Productions, both address the ephemerality of their performances through their manipulation of the site, and changing the site into a kind of memorial: one through a fixed installation (a mural), the other through the regularity of its

repetition (a ritualizing of the event). Also since much of the discourse surrounding political art is structured by the language of the dominant social system, it is important that a performance open a public space where conversations about political topics can begin. Gablik, supporting Dewey's basic argument, states that to acquire social relevance, art must develop a "connective, participatory aesthetic" (1998). This requires art moving into the real world, reconnecting performance to the social practices of their surrounding communities. This is exactly what both *Mission Wall Dances* and *Solstice River* have done. The survey respondents to both performances addressed a sense of solidarity with others in the crowd and audience members to the 2003 performance of *Solstice River* even explicitly mentioned discussing pollution concerns with strangers on the bridge.

The forms of public memory promoted by performances often build community identification through their aesthetic and poetic features rather than through direct appeal to rational intellect (Belanger 2002). One unique feature of the *Solstice River* performance was its blend of beauty with an overt intellectual underpinning. In fact, *Solstice River* incorporated components of ritual, entertainment, healing and education into a single performance. This integration allowed for the connections desired by Hardenbergh to take place and remain meaningful to the audience. Entertainment includes the aesthetics of the event, particularly what is considered beautiful and/or satisfying by a particular culture. *Solstice River* exemplified the ideals of community and environmentalism recast in a performance of the city and nature. One audience member from 2003 noted the "spaciousness of the setting, seeing the sun set, and watching the river flow through the city." Another felt that the most important aspect was the "interweaving of art, nature and the world

of people." While members from the 2004 audience mentioned the "creativity and innovation" in the performance; or that the "dance, music, river, and people [were] not crowded or commercialized… very cool."

In the performance of *Solstice River* healing and education were closely aligned. To begin the healing of the Mississippi River, Hardenbergh needed to educate her audience about pollution in the river and the individual actions that can be taken to ameliorate the problem. Audience members from both years noted that because of the performance they were "reminded not to dump in the storm drains" (2003)…and "think more about cleaning products; try to use less toxic products and less water" (2004). Others "became more aware of daily connection to the river" or how important it is to "raise awareness of the importance of the river to history, community and people's lives" (both 2003). One particularly interesting answer focused on not only education, but how a true healing of the river could occur. This audience member from 2003 wanted to expand the community by bringing even more children to the performance because, "start with the kids—make it lifelong—an ongoing and comprehensive education [beyond] just the schools. Make people feel it is their river—the cities need to help people [see this]."

Many audience members expressed a similar desire for deep-seated change. Actions that were mentioned specifically to bring about a change in the river included: stronger regulations and more aggressive enforcement of anti-pollution laws, creating more opportunities for people to "experience the river," forcing politicians to swim in the river, including the "cost of degradation" into the concept of "the cost of production," and demonstrations that include river clean-ups. *Solstice River* functioned as a site where a

critical consciousness was developed and the preconditions for direct political involvement were formed. The actual changes made by audience members showed the potential power of this nascent political community.

Hardenbergh wanted her audience to "feel more connected to the site and each other." She did not give them a simple answer of how to do this however, but instead allowed the audience to experience both the challenges facing the river and the hope for possible remedies through a revisioning of the Stone Arch Bridge. She used the power of information and alternative visions to build a desire for action amongst her audience. Bodily movement is one of humanity's most expressive acts. When this fundamental piece of human culture is combined with politically aware questions, complex problems can be confronted. *Solstice River* made its audience aware of the fact they are a part of urban, communal, and natural patterns and rhythms. The audience's perception of the site and the river were reinterpreted to conform to the new information they received. The audience became more conscious of their multilayered relationships to the Mississippi River and this led to an awareness of the possibility for change. The sense of place on the Stone Arch Bridge was altered by the performance of *Solstice River* and thus the audience desired change on both a personal and communal level.

Chapter 5

Dancing in Place

I began this study with a problem of definition concerning politics and political participation. Political action that takes place outside of the traditional state focused institutions, like voting booths, jury boxes, or formal protest events, are overlooked by most typologies of political participation. Since women have been informally excluded from state institutions they have also inadvertently been shut out of the discussions surrounding political action. The political actions engaged in by women, particularly ones that bring them out into the public in nontraditional ways, have been largely ignored by mainstream academia, and even some feminist scholars (Agnew et al 2003; Bridge and Watson 2001, Nast and Pile 1998). Yet my investigations of three dance performances, choreographed and performed primarily by women, show that women are making their views known and entering political debates without necessarily creating an antagonistic relationship. Dance is an art form that is dominated by women, and my cases are no different. While none of the choreographers in this study are creating dances directly about women's lives, they all incorporate gender into their work; they all explicitly label themselves as feminist, and their art as politically motivated. While the sites of more formal politics will continue to command a lion's share of the research done into the spaces of political activity, female artists will continue to invade the public realm in ways that should not be ignored. These dance performances challenge the notions of where women's political activity can take place and what counts as political activity, even in the public realm.

In urban settings, the kind of outdoor public performance that I documented is a concrete example of extra-systemic political participation. Political geographers have examined other forms of nontraditional political spaces, highlighting how unexpected physical spaces are used for political action and the dissemination of political information (Brown 1997; Jones 2000; Duncan 1996, Sharp, et al 2000). Yet for a variety of reasons, artistic dance has been overlooked by this literature. As I have argued in the preceding chapters, these women intend to say something political and then they do. All of the choreographers I studied strategically used the topic, the location and the dancing itself to alter the audience's sense of place for the performance site. This possibility for change in how a site is viewed is what creates the possibility for a dance performance site to become a political space. By recognizing social conventions of public space, we can analyze how the material conditions and the performative act combined to create political action in these dance events. All three performances occurred outside of a designated theatrical space and thus had to articulate and define themselves through the properties, qualities, and meanings produced between the event and the location. Assumptions about the place for art were called into question by performing on sidewalks, buildings and bridges. These site specific dance performances required the audiences to reflect on why the performance was set in that particular public space. Instead of the performance site being a theatrical blank slate, the outdoor urban surroundings were explicitly meaningful.

I went into this work trying to understand why outdoor dance was so powerful. I am both a dancer and a geographer and knew intrinsically that outdoor performance could be political from both watching it and doing it. The process of completing this dissertation

clarified to me that the fulcrum of the power of outdoor performance was located in how these two disparate portions of my life came together. Understanding the social matrix of a place, including the place of performance, involves understanding the multiplicity of experiences and intentions of the individuals who use and define that place. Performance breaks down the illusion of rational control and understanding of a place. Public performance also breaks down the separation of the 'art-world' from the 'real world' that had made art less effective a tool for examining social issues. All three of these socially committed artists shifted the context, shifted the site, of their artistic endeavors to create dances that were deeply and radically democratic. Dewey argued that art needs to be in the everyday lives and spaces of people to be effective (1934). These dances incorporated the most mundane of places in modern urban life: municipal buildings, hair salons, and condo balconies. Nevertheless, the individual choreographers understood their art, and in fact created their performances works, explicitly in the physical and social context of their chosen site(s); namely that site's relationship to networks of meaning. The site became the framework for the dances, yet they were filtered through the choreographer's distinct sensibility and stylistic preferences (Lefevre 2005). This combination of materiality and representation allows audience members to recognize the subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar (Brecht 1964).

By alienating the spectators from their everyday notions of what is to happen where, the performance works discussed in this dissertation are intended to make the spectators think more deeply about their relationship to not only the performance site, but also how the performance topic fits into wider social networks. This is why it is so important to look at

both the material conditions and the performative act in understanding how the political action and communication happens. Performance is a good venue for exploring these concerns because the meaning of the site is so consciously manipulated by the director/choreographer. Through witnessing an alienated performance audience members become aware of their own perceptions as they compare the performer actions to their own situation, politics, and desires (Brecht 1964; Diamond 1996). From their own subject positions, the choreographers, performers, and audience members, each approach the historical understandings of the site. It is from the conscious management of these differing interpretations that political persuasion can begin. These performances go beyond transgressing public space and into the realm of resisting the status quo. There was an intentionality that makes these dance performances truly sites of political communication.

Transgress, Resist, Re-engage:

These female choreographers used their bodies, and those of their dancers, to transgress the space. Unlike resistance, transgression "does not, by definition, rest on the intentions of actors, but on the *results*—on the "being noticed" of a particular action" (Cresswell 1996: 22-23, emphasis in original). Transgression can be seen. It is noticeable. Resistance is intentional "action against some disliked entity with the intention of changing or lessening its effect" (Cresswell 1996: 22). Resistance is intended to resist a wrong, change something, or actively disrupt a pattern that is deemed unjust. The spectrum between transgression and resistance are in some ways similar to the distinction between entertainment and ritual, it is not simply a case of either or. These terms are a spectrum. The change from transgression to resistance and entertainment and ritual is one of intent and

outcome. The actions taken by the women in this dissertation were certainly entertainment, and they were efficacious. They were transgressive of norms, but their intent was to change attitudes, actions, and understandings. The dances are resisting both the 'proper' place for art and the norms that exclude women's political voices from the public realm. This was not the flashy resistance of a march on Washington D.C., but the performances were effective in obtaining smaller scale objectives. Their actions made a few audience members question their assumptions, changed a few minds, and reinforced the commitment to change of those already convinced.

The power of transgression "lies in its ability to reveal topographies of power that surround us" (Cresswell 1996: 176). This is a part of the power of performance as well. Social life can be temporarily reordered during a performance. Dance performances are able to alienate spectators from their habitual approaches to life, thereby revealing and potentially questioning these assumptions. The dance performances in this dissertation manipulated the performance spaces in such a way that social processes could be seen. Dance performances are particularly good at illuminating social practices and understandings of the body that are often obscured. By breaking the rules of "walking" Olive Bieringa made her audience more aware of the natural elements and textures within an urban setting that are often overlooked in the desire to quickly transport our bodies from point A to point B. Bieringa did not use the sidewalk strictly for transportation and thus forced us as an audience to slow down and notice our surroundings. This was also true for Marylee's Hardenbergh's performance of *Solstice River*, by stating the performance was about celebrating the urban communities attachment to

the Mississippi River at the summer solstice, her audience was encouraged to notice the surrounding neighborhoods, the river itself, and even the wider celestial cycles.

Jo Kreiter's work, through its aerial acrobatics, highlighted a way of understanding the body in space that is rarely reflected upon. By hanging her dancers from wires and having them jump and leap off a vertical wall, Kreiter reminded her audience that human bodies are never less than four dimensional. Our bodies exist in both space and time; they take up space, and have volume. As we live our daily lives we are rarely conscious of the *spatial* aspects of place. All places that exist in the real world include a geometry and volume. Places are framed by the material objects in that location, and the negative space between them. These geometric configurations are ever-present, yet it was when Jo Kreiter utilized the dancer's body moving fully in all directions, including front, back, out, and up-side down space—that the full radius of bodily spatial relations was brought to life in living color.

Political theories overlook the significance of embodiment by focusing on elite actors in formal spaces. These dances focus on non-elites, are created and performed by non-elites, and take place outside of formal venues. Yet these women are not outside of their art, nor are they outside of politics. They are embedded in both. It is our "embeddedness that makes us who we are and that shape our experiences, opportunities, and potential" (Staeheli and Kofman 2004: 8). They are embedded in the city.

In some ways, women just being on city streets is transgressive in its own right (Domosh and Seager 2001; McDowell 1999). One of the ways city spaces have been constructed is as a masculine domain of skyscrapers, competition, and violence. Marylee Hardenbergh rejected that understanding when she explicitly stated she wanted to 'feminize'

the concrete of city streets. She did this by 'softening' the lines of the Stone Arch Bridge through movement, streamers, flags and suns. The performance of *Solstice River* created political community in a public space that was specifically designed to highlight the relationships between the riparian communities and the Mississippi River and to build a connection that leads the audience to take action to protect the River.

Jo Kreiter took over a small street located between a three story parking garage and the back of a Best Buy big box retailer. This street had no 'destination' and was thus not welcoming to pedestrians, in fact this space might be perceived as a potentially dangerous space for women. Nevertheless, during the weekends of Flyaway Productions performances, the female performers took back that street. Olive Bieringa also 'took back the street,' yet she did it on her own terms, which was recognized by one of her audience members:

> Olive the magician. A simple trick of drafting the backside of a bus, reappearing a half-block down after it passed, had me as giddy as a baby playing peek-a-boo. I love how Olive didn't just hug the rare tree nor did she cling to an eco-friendly agenda. She partnered the nasty dust of sidewalk repair and the deafening sound of their machines to create images as romantic as any Maxfield Parish waterfall...she the weeping willow, not the nymph in the flimsy toga. audience member Kristin Van Loon ("archive BodyCarography")

Bieringa was not the stereotypical woman in the city. Despite going into restaurants and hair salons she was not a consumer. Nor was she polite as she balanced on her shoulders with her feet in the faces of those who would not acknowledge her. Bieringa slid down embankments,

picked up cigarette butts, and generally got very dirty. She used her female body to disrupt (transgress) what women "do" in public.

Tim Cresswell fully acknowledges that the limitation of his work focusing on transgression is overcoming the fact that "it is not enough to constantly deconstruct and destabilize" (Cresswell 1996:176). The choreographers I interviewed were aware that just transgressing in urban space was not sufficient for their social or political goals. They included in their art a political intent, a sense of resistance, they wanted change. However they were also not interested in producing a confrontation per se. Instead of creating an antagonistic dichotomy of us versus them, the choreographers invited their audiences into an alternate world created through the performance. This ephemeral re-ordering of the world involved aspects that both reinforced and transgressed social norms.

A performance site is an inherently social space which means it is complex and varied. These dances were a part of society and thus reflect the society's dominant value system. However, these same events provided a narrative which resisted the status quo and allows hidden voices to be heard and seen. Jo Kreiter's work on displacement in San Francisco was highlighting members of society that are often ignored, yet she called on American's sense of fairness and justice as the means to engage their audience. This performance created identification in her audience to those hidden voices through a kinetic connection to their plight. Olive Bieringa actively engaged with elements and individuals of the city that most take for granted or try to avoid. For instance, she interacted with men hanging out in a plaza and she danced with a drunk without prejudice or judgment. In both cases, there was communication, and then she moved on. She also engaged with cabbies throughout her entire

performance: she raced them, waved to them, hoped not to be run over by them, and even went into a coffee house known to cater to them. I know personally that despite living blocks off Nicollet Ave at one point in my life, I had never noticed the cabs and their drivers that this performance made me see.

Marylee Hardenbergh re-ordered the world during her performance and created a "voice" for an entity that has none. By creating a venue where she put protecting the environment first, Hardenbergh was inviting her audience to imagine a utopia "that boundless "no-place" where the social scourges that currently plague us…might be ameliorated, cured, redressed, solved, never to haunt us again" (Dolan 2001: 456-57). She turned the expected order up-side-down. The river was alive and speaking to us, a disparate urban population came together to form a "community," and the physical structures of the city were subsumed beneath their human dancers. She re-made the world to her liking and then attempted to persuade the audience of the beauty of her vision.

Persuasion was the tool of choice, not power. Persuasion consists of presenting reasons in a process that mixes cognition and emotion in a manner that can help transform others' preferences (Mansbridge 1996). I do not mean to overstate the ability of the choreographers to change the perceptions of their entire audiences, but rather to suggest that dance performance as a means to convey political ideas in an informal manner can be justified. Just as more traditional political actors, like political candidates, orchestrate the scene to maximize their message, so too did these three choreographers. Each woman felt she had something she wanted to express and redefined the place of performance to include these new connections and hidden voices.

Using the spectrum built between transgression and resistance I would argue that the performance of *Go! Taste the City* by Olive Bieringa of the BodyCartography Project was by far the most transgressive of the three performances, and conversely the least successful in its resistance. This hour long performance had a very small audience and produced no real long term change in the modes or understandings of moving on city streets. Despite this, the performance did actually change the physical, material reality of Nicollet Avenue. Bieringa moved rocks, slid on pyramids, got wet and left footprints. The performance also inspired the few of us who saw it to slow down and observe the environments that Olive Bieringa was engaging along the street. Audience members also broke the rules that govern urban space when they stepped into the waterfall themselves, ignored the danger to Olive as she walked in traffic, or followed her into the International Corner Café. This was a performance that challenged the accepted norms, but did little to change them. Ironically, the most lasting impressions I have of Bieringa's performance was the power of the existing bonds that tie a society together

Jo Kreiter's *Mission Wall Dances* was trying to find more balance between transgression and resistance. The performance used transgression to build a foundation for resistance, but it is not clear from my survey data if collective memory and the creation of a memorial is enough to actually create change in how audience members respond to issues surrounding low income residents in the Mission District neighborhood. Kreiter also changed the environment of her performance. She had a three story wall painted, had structures built that jutted out of that wall, closed the street, and put people on that street. The performance included images of migrant workers, lesbians, and tenement housing residents. These images

transgressed public space because, despite their beauty, they were unsettling. The score commissioned from Pamela Z used local voices of those who had been displaced to remind the audience that this situation was real for some people, and not just a performative fiction. The lasting image of the mural does keep the issue in the minds of those who saw the piece, and responded to my queries. Yet is more awareness enough to qualify as an example of resistance? The intent to add depth to neighborhood consciousness of those that had been displaced was successful, but from my data I cannot put forth any conclusions about actual changes in the actions of audience members.

The performance of *Solstice River* by Global Site Productions is interesting in that it was the least confrontational of the three performances and arguably the most successful in resisting the status quo. The performance was not actively antagonistic, but it was still transgressive. Much of American culture does not celebrate the summer solstice, include 'paganistic' expressions of women's spirituality, or attend dances that include performers you can barely see. However, because of the topic and the virtuosity of the dance itself, this performance was able to connect with a defined community of people who care about the river, and create an artistic bridge for those who had not thought about those issues previously. *Solstice River* resisted the individualistic assumptions within American culture that does not relate personal actions to societal concerns. Marylee Hardenbergh was able to use all of the tools at her disposal, such as the programs, site and dance, to overcome this notion of individual self-sufficiency. She showed her audiences the connections between themselves, their neighbors and the river and was able to elicit actual changes in behaviors toward the river.

Women in public, dancing:

All three of the dances highlighted had very clear political messages that were communicated through traditional means: the topic, title, and program. Yet these aspects, while effective, would not have as effectively conveyed the meanings they did if they did not use the body as the primary medium for communication. Dance, like other forms of art, agitates its viewers directly (Dewey 1934). We experience a dance through more than one of our senses. While vision is the sense that is most commonly used to first experience a dance, those visual images also create a kinesthetic response. As viewers we begin to imagine the feeling of hanging off the side of a building, or walking down the center of a road, or feeling the river's spray as the water hits the dike. We place ourselves in the action.

At the most personal of scales, our bodies are involved in the making of places. We experience places on a somatic level (Casey 2001). Dance as an art form reminds us that our bodies are more than simply a transportation vehicle for our brains. The dancer embodies the integration of the mind and body and invites us to do likewise. The pieces I have chronicled were incredibly physical, yet they were also intellectually challenging.

By engaging audience members both at the level of the mind and the body, these choreographers aimed to foster a greater understanding of the political intent of their dances. For instance, Olive Bieringa's audience members were familiar with Nicollet Ave, but gained a whole new perspective of the radical changes that can occur in urban areas as they followed her explorations of the city street. The disparities between wealth and poverty were stark and tangible. There was no litter to pick off the street near the modern masterpiece of Peavey Plaza, yet the abandoned lot next to the abandoned liquor store was strewn with broken glass,

plastic wrappers, and odd bits of metal. As Bieringa traversed those seven blocks, the white office workers in loafers and pumps gave way to cabbies, the intoxicated, and individuals like the wayward Viking who was clearly just passing through. Nicollet Avenue took on a whole new meaning for those who saw it under the careful guidance of Olive Bieringa.

While Jo Kreiter's audience may have understood rationally the vulnerability of tenement house dwellers, to see the two women who performed the salsa dancing two stories up without any kind of safety equipment made that vulnerability more tangible and frightening. *Mission Wall Dances* made the displacement of Mission District residents an intellectual, physical and emotional reality for the audience. Similarly, Marylee Hardenbergh's audience may have understood intellectually the importance of protecting the Mississippi River, yet to hold on to the 'blue highway' and see thousands of others joining in that action viscerally connected the audience together in a manner that made the power of individuals acting in concert "real." There was an emotional response to this awareness of togetherness and I saw tears among the audience members at this point. That the body is engaged with the mind in dance performances allows for communication that is more than just rational; it engages us passionately. Chantal Mouffe (2001) argues that the mobilizing of passion is why artistic practices have such an important role to play in the public sphere.

However it is important to note whose bodies are being watched during these performances. The audiences were specifically watching women's bodies. While we all have bodies, our individual bodies are marked with socially constructed categories that change over time and profoundly impact our lives. Women are often reduced to their bodies and sexualized in Western culture. Yet it is precisely the systematic marginalization of women's

bodies that can create those same bodies as a privileged site for political intervention (Wolff 1997). "The body becomes a geography, mobile, constructed, criss-crossed by desire, that challenges a stable ontology or a static, essentialized female" (Dolan 1996:16). Dance that questions and exposes the construction of the body in culture challenges the established order. The three choreographers I studied used women's bodies to subvert the regimes of representation that deny women a space in the public realm. In the dances chronicled in this dissertation, the social classifications placed on the performers' bodies were highlighted and questioned. Olive Bieringa's race, gender, and occupational status were explicitly juxtaposed against others she encountered as she moved through Minneapolis' city streets. Marylee Hardenbergh used performers who were young and old, who had little dance training, and who you could barely see move, thereby subverting the social category of "dancer." And Jo Kreiter's performance was dancing one of the stories important to the Mission District's Hispanic residents using performers whose ancestors came to San Francisco from East Asia. In all three cases, the bodies on display were de-naturalized from common expectations—socially, racially, and spatially. The act of viewing a dance is only legible when it is acknowledged that the "experience is never pure and 'visceral,' but mediated through a net of social relations…. Dance is only given life through its place in social relations. …Far from being immediate and unmediated, dance is refracted though the lenses of society and power" (Cresswell 2006: 58). Our bodies *are* socially constructed entities, but the location of that body is central to understanding the relationships between the physical body and the meaning associated with it.

Independently, all the choreographers made the decision that to most effectively convey their political concern the art to be produced needed to leave the confines of the theater building and go out into the everyday spaces of their audiences. As was seen in the responses to the survey data, new associations were created in the minds of audience members with the performance spaces. The ability of these three performances to create a new sense of place, with new associations, was clearly tied to the political intent of the performance event. In order to mobilize people toward democratic designs, politics needs to be in our everyday lives and speak to people about their everyday passions. Politics needs spaces where an agonistic communication can take place. This potential confrontation of ideas is necessary in a democracy because "to see that you can really exercise you rights, you need to be given alternatives. If you don't have the choice, then the whole democratic process is completely meaningless" (Mouffe 2000: 123). These politically engaged artists were adding to the imaginative life of their chosen environments. I have attempted to demonstrate how these performances inserted new practices into their chosen sites that led to new understandings, new visions of what was possible. They were showing their audiences alternative ways of being in the world. The dances created additional models of women acting in public space. This dissertation documented women being political in public space in a manner that did not include neighborhood meetings, formal protests, or running for office. These performances demonstrated the kinds of spaces that should be investigated as 'new spaces of citizenship' (Mouffe 2001). These performances were a non-vocal, and non-rational mode, of communication that illustrate why these aspects are so important to Mouffe's understanding of political behavior.

The ephemeral end

All of these performances were not politics as usual: they were playful, occurred on city walkways, created enduring memories, and re- visioned the place to include the overlooked or ignored. This dissertation was intended to ground one form of political action that is rarely acknowledged, women being creative in public space. The women who created the dances I documented wanted to be heard through their art. Yet dance is a very ephemeral art. To be effective as a political instrument the performances had to be more than a transgressive intervention in the place. The choreographers hoped their artistic expressions would change the everyday lives of people who saw the work, even if the change was on a very small scale.

The dance groups worked against the ephemerality of performance by consciously manipulating the material conditions and the responses (emotional and intellectual) produced during their performance. They manipulated material sites: the streets, sidewalks, buildings and bridges. They also manipulated the responses: curiosity, fear, excitement and joy. Through these performances a sense of community, however fleeting, was created in each place. The skill of choreographers was clearly seen by the fact that the performances and the issues they represented began to belong in the space, they were no longer "out of place." The performances became less transgressive and, for a time, became a source for common understanding. Each of these three choreographers used their site-specific performances to forward ideas about how to be, and how to be with each other. Jill Dolan argues that "performance can articulate a common future, one that's more just and equitable, one in which we can all participate more equally, with more chances to live fully and contribute to

the making of culture" (2001: 455). The performances were open and accessible, arguably fulfilling Dewey's call for art to create citizens and engage democracy as a participatory forum. When art reaches its full potential, Dewey believed it would be a means to work through obstacles to collaboration, and of discovering (or creating) commonalities. This building of common understandings is the basis of Habermas' communicative action (2001), but these performances utilized more aspects of our political selves than our reason.

Public dance performance is a part of our democratic civil society that combines the rational and emotional aspects of our political lives. These performances built strong connections to the political themes presented yet involved little to no confrontation. The deep political sentiments were expressed in works that were not controversial in any way. Dance, and performance more generally, have something unique to add to the discussion of where women's political voices can be heard and seen in the public realm. It can also add to an understanding of how women express their political views. Adding performance to the repertory of sites one looks for female political participation will yield a fuller appreciation of women's political activities. However, to get an even more complete picture of women's political involvement, activities like these dance performances must be combined with neighborhood organizing, letter writing, PTA meetings, buying organic products, living in trees and running for president. Women's political activities are as varied as the women who do them. These three dance performances are not necessarily representative of the hundreds of dance performances that take place every year, much less all of the overlooked sites of women's political activities. Nevertheless by de-familiarizing historic places and inserting their own interpretations, the Olive Bieringa, Jo Kreiter, and Marylee Hardenbergh showed

that public dance can be political. These performances demonstrated the kinds of spaces that should be investigated as 'new spaces of citizenship.'

Appendix A: Figures

Figure 1: Dancing in the Minneapolis skyway system. Photo by author.

Figure 2: On the street during the *Buy Nothing* performance.

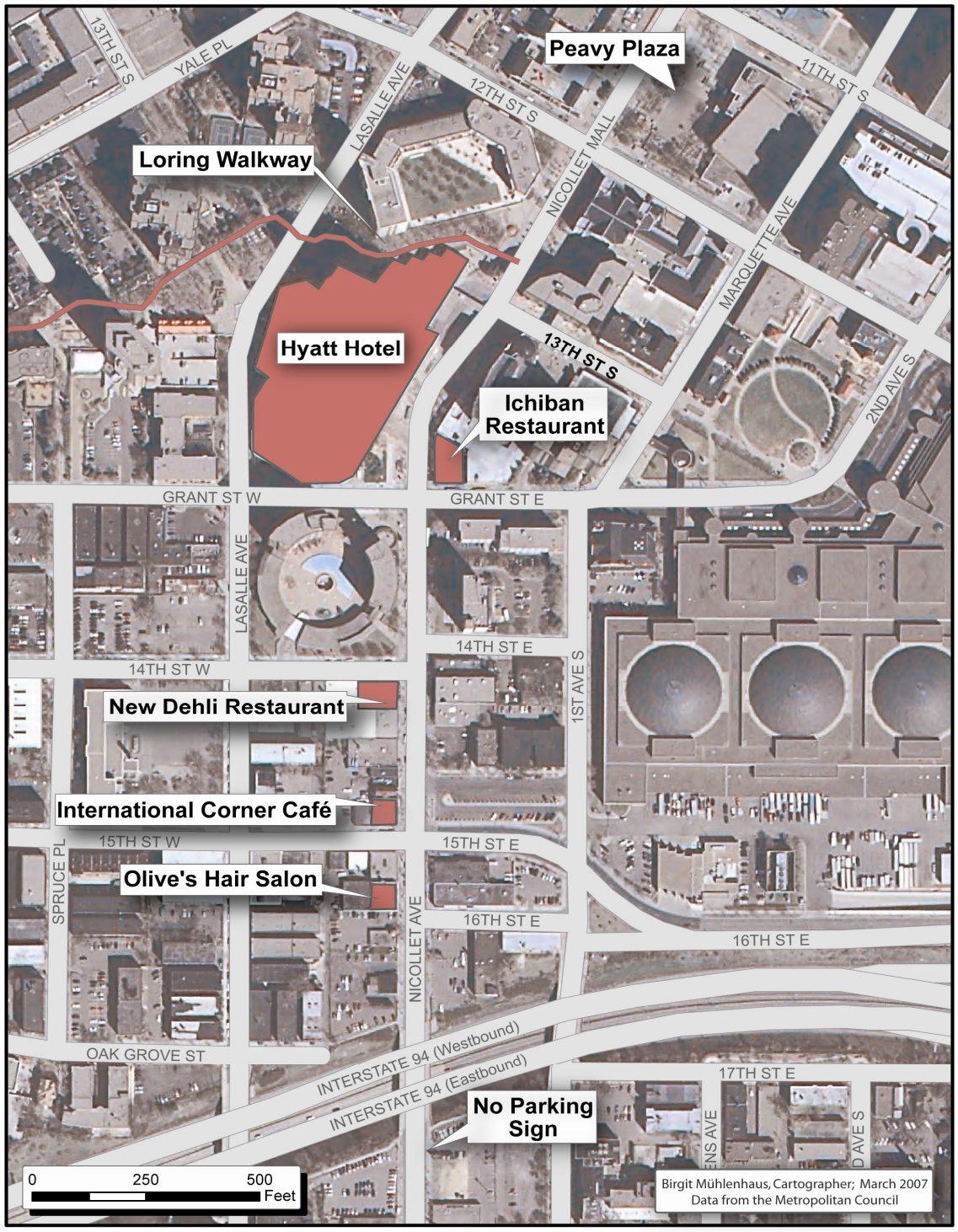

Figure 3: Map of Nicollet Ave from Peavey Plaza to I-94 overpass. Map by Birgit Muehlenhaus

Figure 4: Olive Bieringa inching her way through Peavey Plaza, notice the men hanging out in the background. Photo by author.

Figure 5: Olive Bieringa getting misted by the waterfall in Peavey Plaza. Photo by author.

Figure 6: Audience member Eric Ramstad investigating the waterfall for himself. Photo by author.

Figure 7: Olive Bieringa swaying beneath a small grove of trees on Nicollet Avenue. Photo by author.

Figure 8: Olive Bieringa sliding down a brick incline near the Loring Park pedestrian pathway. Photo by author.

Figure 9: Olive Bieringa lying in Nicollet Avenue as a local city bus approaches. Photo by author.

Figure 10: Olive Bieringa dancing on top of a mound of construction debris outside the Ichiban restaurant. Photo by author.

Figure 11: Olive Bieringa walking down the center of Nicollet Avenue carrying a large rock. Photo by author.

Figure 12: Olive Bieringa dancing with a patron of the New Delhi restaurant. Photo by author.

Figure 13: Olive Bieringa and audience member inside the International Corner Café. Photo by author.

Figure 14: Olive Bieringa dancing inside the Olive Salon. Photo by author.

Figure 15: Olive Bieringa performing a no handed headstand in an abandoned parking lot. Photo by author.

Figure 16: Olive Bieringa being moved by the rushing traffic on Interstate 94 traveling below the highway overpass. Photo by author.

Figure 17: Moments after the end of the performance piece, Olive Bieringa standing next to Eric Ramstad. Photo by author.

Figure 18: Portrait of the mural after the dancers have been added. Photo by Joel Sass.

Figure 19 Image of the mural at the time of the performances. Photo by author.

Figure 20: San Francisco's Mission District, including the location of the Gartland Apartments fire and the site of the Mission Wall Dances performance. Map by Birgit Muehlenhaus

Figure 21: Dancer Christine Chen painted into the mural dangling from a steel umbrella. Photo by Joel Sass

Figure 22: Dancer Aimee Lam portraying a local flower seller. Photo by author.

Figure 23: Dancers Tamara Welch (standing) and Yayoi Kambrara performing a daring salsa. Photo by author.

Figure 24: Dancers Tara Brandel, Anje Marshall, Aimee Lam and Christine Chen during the ‘water’ section. Photos by author

Figure 25: Dancers Christine Chen and Anje Marshall dance in unison on their doors. Photo by author.

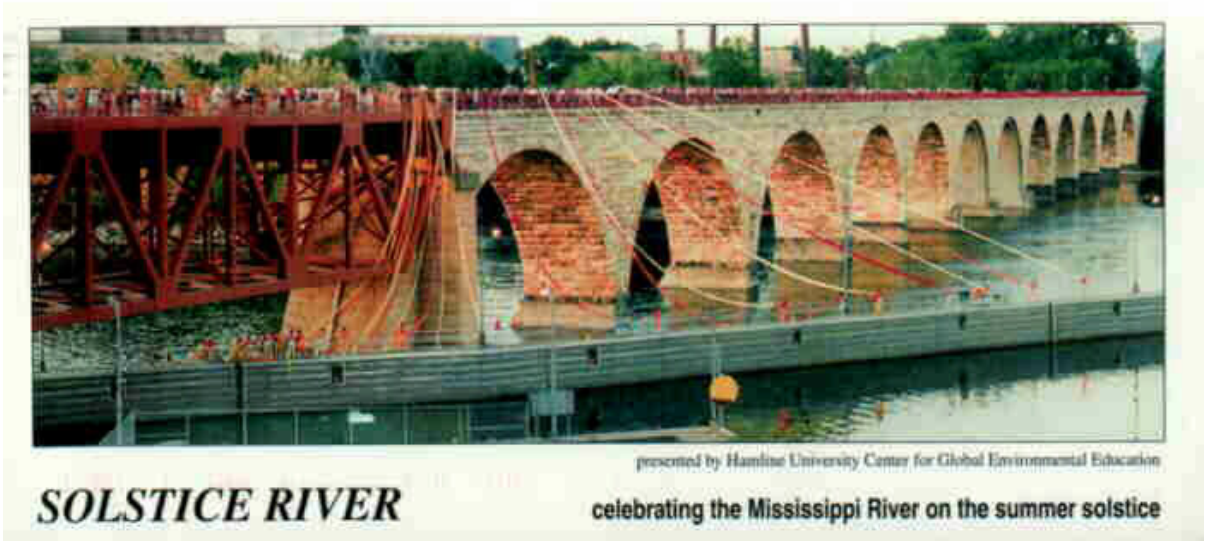

Figure 26: Promotional postcard for *Solstice River* 2003. Used with permission by Marylee Hardenbergh.

Figure 27: Display set up prior to performance. Photo by author.

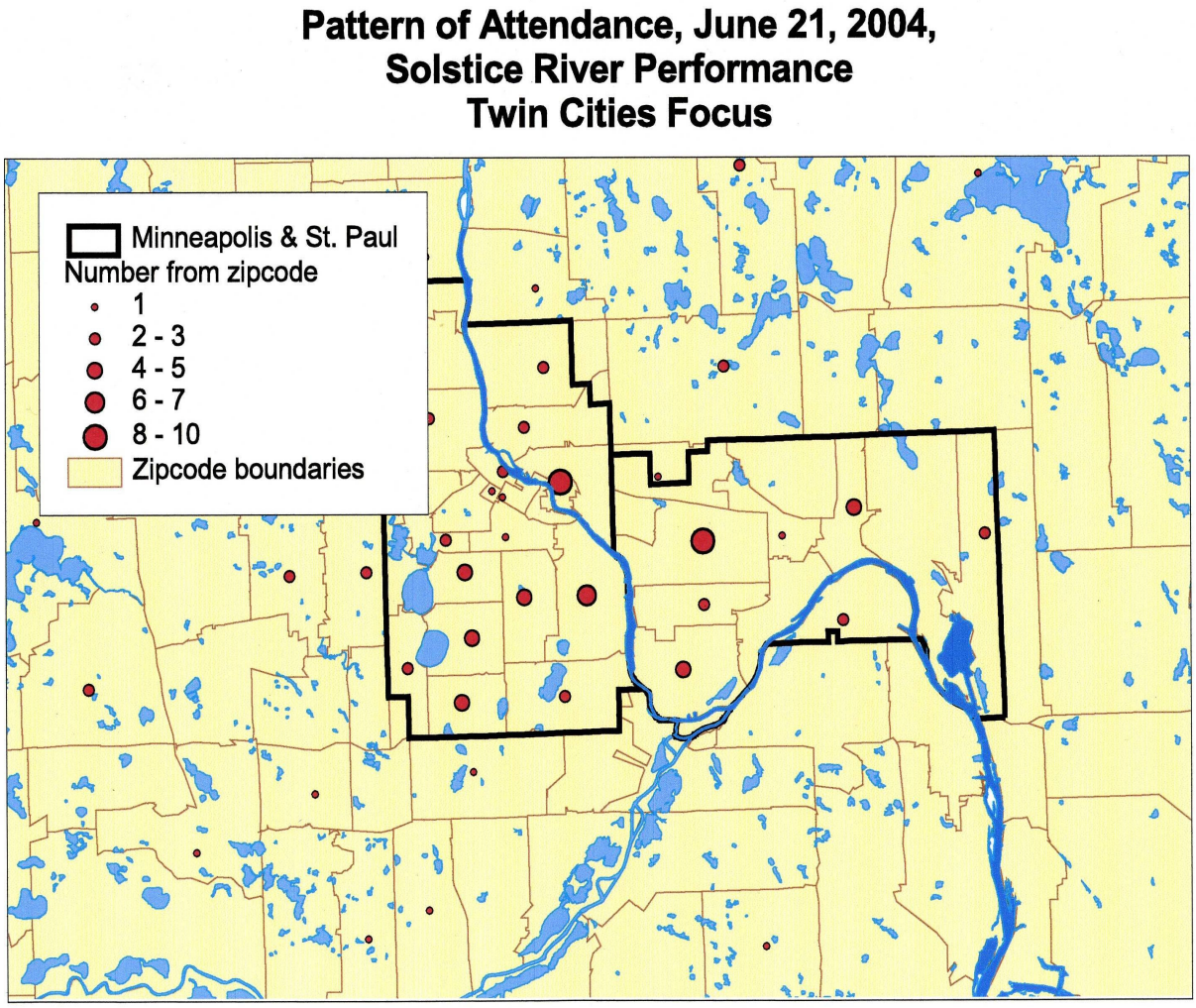

Figure 28: Pattern of attendance: Twin Cities focus. Map by Carol Gershmel.

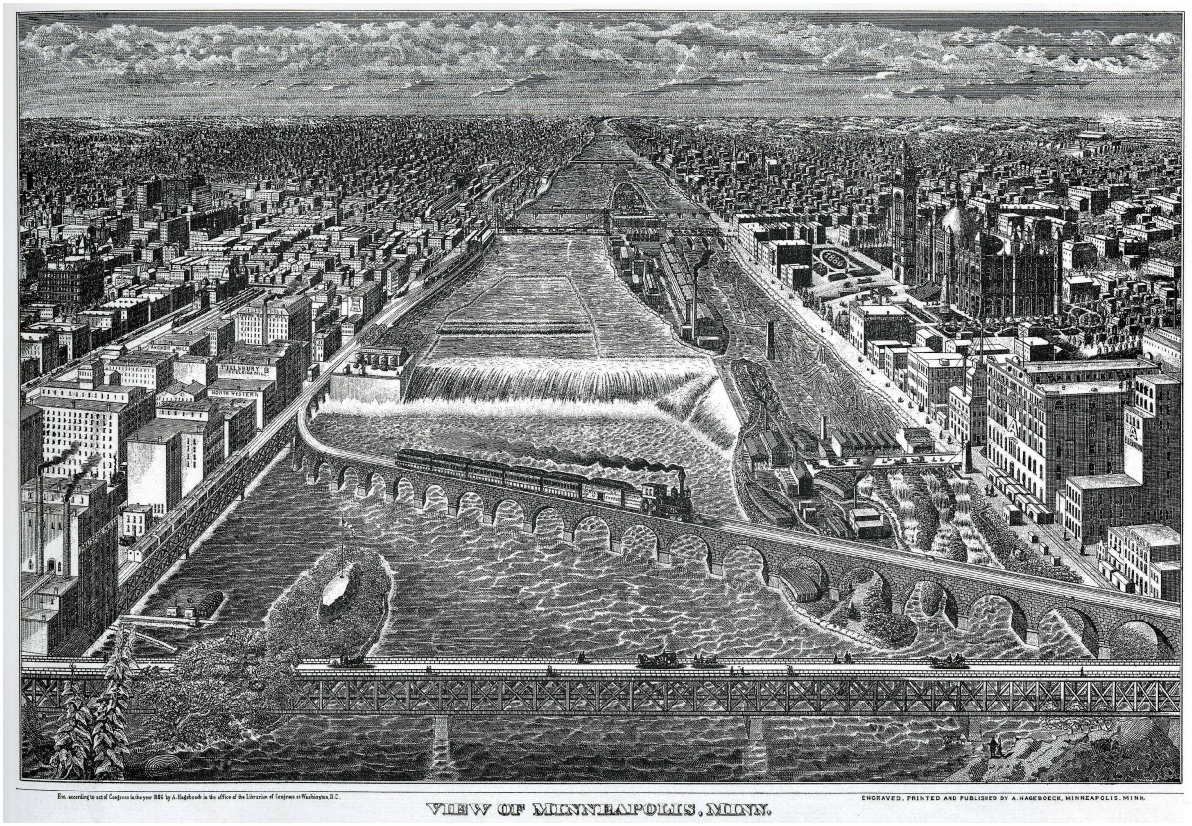

Figure 29: *View of Minneapolis, Minn.* Unsigned. Engraved, printed and published by Augustus Hageboeck, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1886. Line engraving 11 ¼ x 16 5/8 in. From the personal collection of David Lanegran.

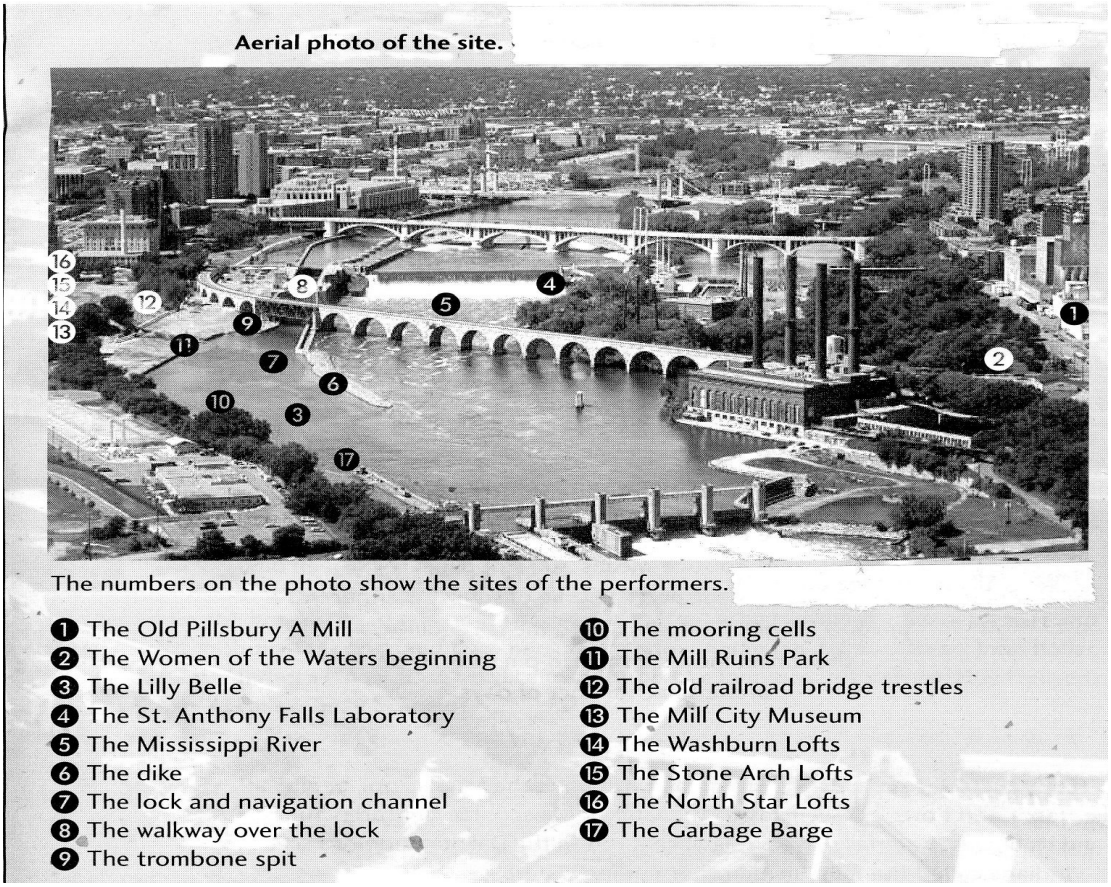

Figure 30: Ariel view of Stone Arch Bridge with important sites within the performance noted. Source 2003 program, used with permission by Marylee Mardenbergh..

Figure 31: Women of the waters parading down the bridge. Photo by author.

Figure 32 A dancer running with triangles. Photo by author.

Figure 33: Dancer with collapsed sun disk. Photo by author.

Figure 34: Dancers on the balcony of nearby condos and the Mill City Museum. Photo by author.

Figure 35: Dike dancers with sun disks fully expanded. Photo by author.

Figure 36: Streamers attaching the bridge to the dike below. Photo by author.

Figure 37: A Mill Ruins Park dancer performing with a brightly colored streamer. Photo by author.

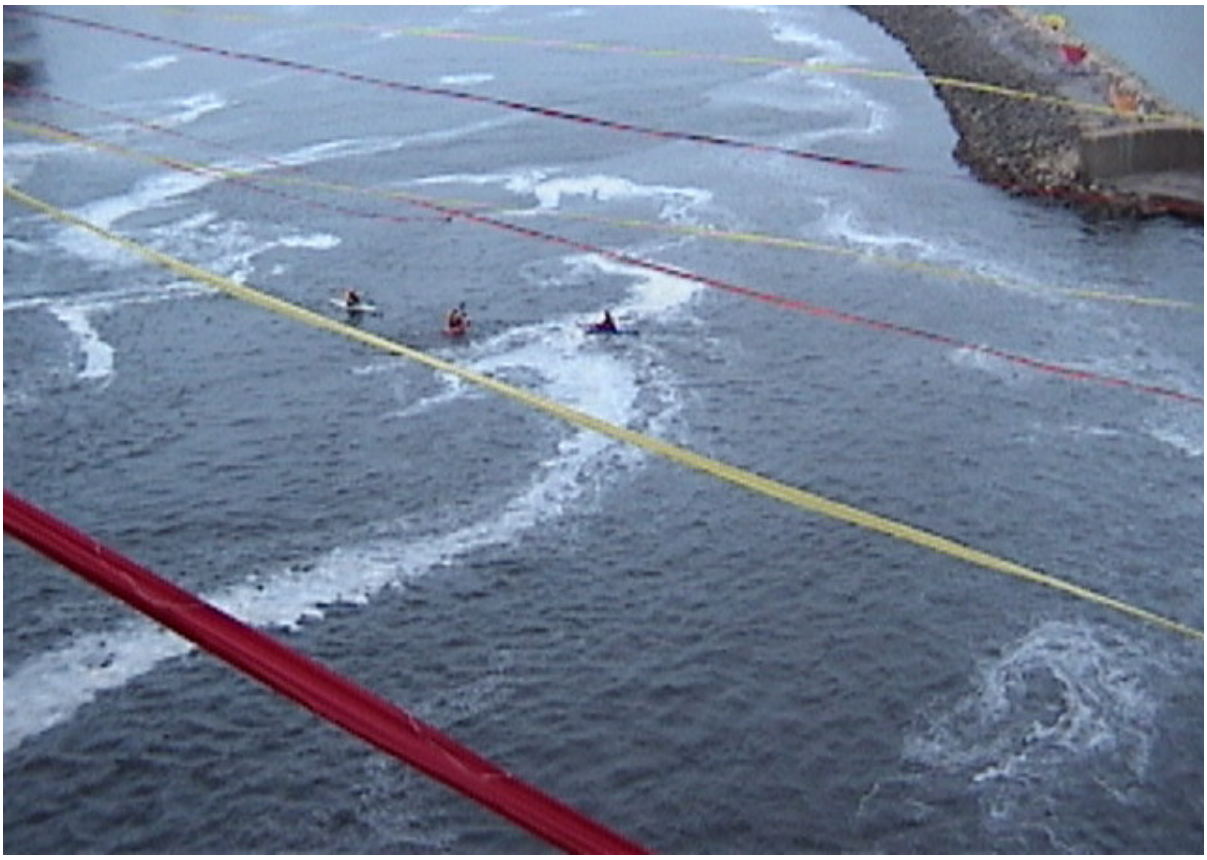

Figure 38: Streamers framing the kayakers below. Photo by author.

Figure 39: Dike dancers with flags. Photo by author.

Figure 40. The moment of sunset June 21, 2003. Photo by author.

Figure 41. Choreographer Marylee Hardenbergh and her audience enjoying the blue highway at the end of the performance piece. Photo by author.

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